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ABSTRACT

A seminar sponsored by the Irish Association for Applied Linguistics on the role of media and media technologies in second and foreign language learning is reported. The organization of this report reflects the program of the seminar. Four plenary papers established some broad applied linguistic perspectives and presented an overview of recent applications of audio, video, and computers. The papers and authors are as follows: "Media, Media Technologies, and Language Learning: Some Applied Linguistic Perspectives" (David Little); "Using Audio and the Language Laboratory" (Christine Helot); "Issues in the Use of Video Technology in the Language Classroom" (Mary Ruane); and "Computers in Language Teaching" (Geraldine Kennedy). A "fairground" portion of the seminar included the following brief commentaries: "Answers to wh-Questions about 'Authentik'" (Sean Devitt); "'Dushlan'--Maire Trease Ni Dhonnchadha Agus" (Eamonn O Donaill); "'Cogar'--Language, Experience, and Culture" (Liz McSkeane); "'Camino a Castilla'--a Multi-media Communicative Course in Spanish for Advanced Students" (Miranda Stewart); "'Kaleidoscope'--A French-Language Video Kit" (Tony Weymes); "'Daoine ag Caint'--Irish Language Videos" (Helen O Murchu); "'Cluichi Teana sa Seomra Ranga'--Language Games in the Classroom" (Noirin Ni Nuadhain); "Parlez-Vous Banque?" (Francoise Blin and Seamus Kennedy); "Some Reflections on an Experiment in Computer-Assisted Language Learning" (Carlos Lobo); and "Interactive Video with the Autotutor" (Helene Conway-Mouret). A concluding round-table session discussed issues raised by the seminar. (LB)

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Media technologies and language learning

edited by
David Little
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Bebhinn Ó Meadhra

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Media technologies and language learning

Proceedings of an IRAAL seminar held at Trinity College, Dublin, on 25 November 1989

edited by
David Little
and
Bebhinn Ó Meadhra

IRAAL

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Foreword

IRAAL had three reasons for organizing a seminar on the role of media and media technologies in second and foreign language learning. First, it was one of the areas of international applied linguistic research that had not previously provided it with a seminar programme. Secondly, IRAAL believed that a seminar with this focus could make a useful contribution to the current debate on language learning in Ireland. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, IRAAL was interested in raising the level of that debate, much of which tends to be conducted with a blithe disregard for the complexity of the issues involved. It is easy to demand that more pupils in our schools should learn more languages more efficiently; easy to lament the general deficiencies of our educational system; easy to urge the government to spend more money on education in general and language teaching in particular. But it is an altogether more difficult matter to draw up proposals that are detailed and coherent enough to make a qualitative difference to what goes on in language classrooms.

Applied linguistics seeks to identify and understand the different components of the language learning process and the different factors that shape it for better or for worse. Its intellectual integrity depends on an unfailing recognition of the complexity of that process. By no means all applied linguists are language teachers; by the same token, not all language teachers are applied linguists. It is possible, and entirely respectable, to be one without being the other. But systematic and long-term progress in language teaching and language learning will depend on successful collaboration between the two specialisms, and IRAAL intended its seminar to encourage such collaboration.

The organization of this volume reflects the programme of the seminar. The morning session was devoted to four plenary papers that established some broad applied linguistic perspectives and presented an overview of recent applications of audio, video and computers; there followed a two-hour "fairground" session in which practitioners presented their work to participants; and the concluding plenary session gave the seventy participants an opportunity to discuss some of the issues raised by the seminar.

Perhaps the most encouraging thing about the seminar was the range and quality of pioneering work on display. The fact that this work was new to the majority of the participants lends support to the view that language teaching in general has not yet come to terms with the challenge posed by media and media technologies. We hope that this volume will play some small part in changing that situation.

Dublin
January 1991

David Little
Bebhinn Ó Meadhra

Contents

I: Plenary papers

Media, media technologies, and language learning:
some applied linguistic perspectives
David Little .. 3

Using audio and the language laboratory
Christine Hélot .. 17

Issues in the use of video technology in the
language classroom
Mary Ruane .. 29

Computers in language teaching
Geraldine Kennedy .. 48

II: Fairground session

Answers to wh-questions about *Authentik*
Seán Devitt .. 71

Dúshlán
Máire Trease Ní Dhonnchadha agus
Eamonn Ó Dónaill .. 74

Cogar - language, experience and culture
Liz McSkeane .. 77

Camino a Castilla - a multi-media communicative
course in Spanish for advanced students
Miranda Stewart .. 80

Kaléidoscope - a French-language video kit
Tony Weymes .. 85

Daoine ag Caint - Irish-language videos
Helen Ó Murchú .. 87

Cluichí Teanga sa Seomra Ranga - language games in the classroom
Nóirín Ní Nuadháin .. 91

Parlez-vous Banque?
Françoise Blin and Seamus Kennedy .. 95

Some reflections on an experiment in computer-assisted language learning
Carlos Lobo .. 98

Interactive video with the Autotutor
Hélène Conway-Mouret .. 101

III: Concluding plenary session

A round-table discussion of issues raised by the seminar
Transcribed and edited by Bebhinn Ó Meadhra .. 107

I : Plenary papers

Media, media technologies, and language learning: some applied linguistic perspectives

David Little
Centre for Language and Communication Studies
Trinity College
Dublin

Introduction

Most of this seminar will be concerned with specific applications of media technologies to second and foreign language learning. It is the purpose of this paper to sketch an applied linguistic framework within which these applications may be subjected to critical examination and within which further innovation may in due course be attempted.

The first two parts of my paper are concerned respectively with the impact of media on linguistic communication and the possibilities that media technologies offer to teaching. By media I mean channels of mass and long-distance communication like newspapers, radio and television, telephone and telex, and computer networks; by media technologies I mean those technologies that enable us both to receive and reproduce media messages and to create and manipulate messages of our own - in particular, broadcast receivers, audio and video recorders, and computers. In the third part of the paper I consider the principal elements involved in language teaching and learning and some of the ways in which they may be influenced by media and media technologies. The fourth part draws out some of the general implications that my arguments have for the provision and organization of language learning. Finally, the fifth part argues that only if innovations are carefully monitored can their success or failure contribute systematically to subsequent developments, and concludes by making some practical proposals that might help to secure a more central role for media and media technologies in second and foreign language learning in Ireland.

Media and linguistic communication

For several generations language teachers have been taught that our capacity for linguistic communication comprises four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) which operate *via* two channels (spoken and written) and in two modes (receptive and productive). These distinctions are helpful as far as they go; but more recent concern to teach language as communication has taught us also to focus on the different kinds of relationship that can exist between the producer and the receiver of the message. In particular, we have learnt to distinguish between reciprocal and non-reciprocal communication (see, e.g., Widdowson 1978). In reciprocal communication, the paradigm example of which is conversation, meaning is negotiated by two or more participants who repeatedly exchange the roles of message-producer and message-receiver. In non-reciprocal communication, the message usually has one producer, who may be separated from the receiver in space and time. Obvious examples of non-reciprocal spoken communication are speeches and lectures; while writing is almost by definition a non-reciprocal activity. Figure 1 provides a diagrammatic illustration of the distinctions between spoken and written channels, and reciprocal and non-reciprocal communication.

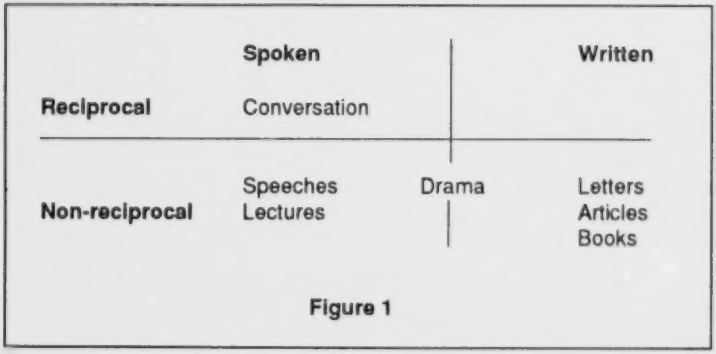

Figure 1

The problem with diagrams of this sort is that they can seem to imply exclusive categories. That they do not is indicated by the way in which drama straddles the divide between spoken and written communication in our example. There are many kinds of spoken communication, especially in the non-reciprocal mode, that are closely related to written discourse:

speeches and lectures, for example, are often partly or wholly read from written scripts. What is more, certain kinds of non-reciprocal discourse can shift towards the reciprocal mode: effective hecklers can turn a speech into a debate, lectures can turn into seminars, a dramatic performance can be significantly shaped by the actors' sense of audience response, and letters or telexes may be components of an ongoing business conversation conducted in writing. Recent research into reading and writing has taught us that all discourse is produced and received by processes of interaction. In reciprocal modes of communication this interaction is a social phenomenon, whereas in non-reciprocal modes it is enacted as a psychological process (for an exploration of this insight in terms of the process of reading, see Widdowson 1983). In other words, when we read and write we conduct a "conversation" respectively with the writer and the reader of our text. Much of this "conversation" typically occurs below the level of consciousness, though it breaks the surface readily enough at crucial stages in the processes of reading and writing - as when we debate with ourselves as we wrestle with a particularly complex exposition of a subject we are unfamiliar with, or when we refine a written argument by deliberately trying to produce counter-arguments.

These are important issues for the applied linguistics of language teaching and language learning, not least because they cast doubt on the validity of hard-and-fast distinctions between listening, speaking, reading and writing. But they are also useful in helping us come to an understanding of the impact that media, especially broadcast media, have had on linguistic communication within and between societies. For our present purposes it is possible to divide the history and development of linguistic communication into three periods:

1 Until the closing years of the nineteenth century, spoken communication was always face-to-face, whether it was reciprocal (conversations) or non-reciprocal (e.g., political speeches), and writing provided the only really effective means of communicating across distances of space and time. This no doubt helps to explain the dominance of the grammar-translation approach in the teaching of foreign languages. Its emphasis on written and especially literary models and its tendency to neglect the spoken language were in part a response to reality: literary and academic texts were almost the only products of target-language communication available to language learners, relatively few of whom would

ever travel to a country where the language was spoken.

2 The invention of the telephone inaugurated the second of our three historical periods by removing the face-to-face constraint from conversation. Somewhat later the advent of radio greatly increased the potential range and impact of non-reciprocal spoken communication (politicians were quick to grasp that whereas they might harangue a crowd of thousands, they must talk to the individual voter listening to them in the comfort of his or her home). Radio also generated new relations between speech and writing. For example, the reading aloud of novels and short stories required adaptations that took account of basic differences between listening and silent reading; and the need to combine the illusion of spontaneity with the requirements of strict timing extended the dramatist's art across a wide range of script types. To begin with, television merely continued these processes, adding certain requirements of its own - for instance, scripts must be delivered in such a way as to look as well as sound spontaneous.

3 Our third period is characterized by an upsurge of interactivity made possible partly by the "democratization" of broadcast media (phone-ins and other modes of audience participation) and partly by the arrival of computers. The determining characteristic of this third period is a proliferation of new types of reciprocal communication. As the period is still in its infancy it is difficult to predict with confidence precisely how it will develop; but it is safe to say that by the end of this century a number of new modes and channels of linguistic communication will be in everyday use - the videophone, for example, which will make long-distance reciprocal communication "face-to-face" and give facial expression and gesture the same central role in telephone as in other conversations; or "live" interactive television systems, which will allow viewers to contribute in various ways to the development of the broadcast message; or desk-top interactive multi-media systems, which will combine text, graphics, moving images and sound in infinitely flexible permutations.

The media have become the indispensable carriers of popular culture; as such they provide the inhabitants of the developed world with a large, varied and inescapable diet of non-reciprocal communication. Much of this communication belongs to genres that the media themselves have

created, and is couched in language that is somewhere between conversational and formal written norms as regards syntax and lexis. In the coming decades, with the proliferation of interactive systems, the media will impinge more rather than less on our lives. I say more about the implications of this situation for second and foreign language teaching and learning in the fourth part of this paper. For the moment it is enough to observe that the traditional concern of language teaching with speaking and listening (mostly in face-to-face encounters), and with reading and writing, overlaps with only a small corner of communicative reality in developed societies in the late 20th century.

The teaching potential of media and media technologies

The initial effect of radio and television was, as I have argued, to extend greatly the range and outreach of non-reciprocal communication. Broadcasting has always been a channel for the rapid and effective dissemination of popular culture, but we should not forget the strongly didactic intentions of Lord Reith and his contemporaries. The early days of broadcasting, at least in Britain, were characterized by a determination to "improve" the audience, the assumption being that those in control of the media knew what was best for the nation.

In their communicative rhetoric early experiments in educational broadcasting differed from the generality of informational programmes only to the extent that they were aimed at an adolescent audience and their content was constrained by the school curriculum. Lessons by radio or television have always enjoyed the advantage of being able to use documentary sources and techniques of dramatic reconstruction that are not readily available to the teacher in the classroom. But as vehicles of learning they suffer from the same disadvantage as all wholly non-reciprocal discourse: there is no opportunity for learners to accommodate new material to what they already know by seeking amplifications and clarifications *as that material is presented to them*. Study notes published for use with radio or television courses are designed to compensate for this disadvantage in a variety of ways - by encouraging the teacher in the classroom to provide additional explanations, for example, or by offering suggestions for various kinds of activity which will enable the learners to process the material of the broadcast after the event. But the fact remains that the initial reception of the message is inescapably non-reciprocal.

Pre-recorded audio and video messages are no more reciprocal than traditionally structured "live" broadcasts. But the fact that the teacher or learner can stop and start them at will significantly improves their pedagogical potential, since small segments of non-reciprocal recorded discourse can be embedded in the reciprocal discourse of teacher and learners. Broadcasters have been quick to recognize this. With the advent of relatively inexpensive video recording facilities, for instance, television language courses have lost much of the character of magisterial lessons and tend increasingly to provide examples of language in use interspersed with explicit learning opportunities.

With the addition of a microphone and a camera, the facility to receive and record radio and television broadcasts can easily be converted into a primitive facility to record our own audio and video messages. We can of course use this facility to create pre-recorded, and therefore non-reciprocal, materials that are tailored to the specific needs of our learners. But we can also involve the learners in the process of reciprocal communication required for the production of a non-reciprocal message. In other words, a microphone and a video camera enable us, on a very small scale, to bring the productive potential of the media into the classroom.

By contrast with audio and video technologies, computers first arrived in the classroom not as receivers of broadcast messages but as stand-alone facilities. Although computers are interactive in their operation, many of the learning programmes devised for them are only minimally reciprocal: the learner contributes to the completion of the message but not to its shape. Indeed, working through many instructional computer programmes is scarcely more reciprocal than filling in an income tax form. At the same time, just as learners can be involved in the processes of reciprocal communication that lead to the production of a non-reciprocal audio or video message, so they can be involved as it were on the other side of the computer, writing programs or using the capacity of the computer to store and sift information as an underpinning for some other activity. Also, when they are linked into telephone and other networks, computers become highly efficient instruments of long-distance reciprocal communication.

The media in relation to the principal elements in language teaching/learning: an applied linguistic approach

The celebrated Canadian study, *The Good Language Learner* (Naiman et al. 1978; see also Skehan 1989, pp.3ff.), distinguishes five principal elements in language teaching/learning, each of which provides a number of focuses for applied linguistic research:

1 *The learner*, whose performance of the learning task will be influenced by such factors as age, intelligence, aptitude, motivation, attitude, personality, and cognitive style.

2 *The context of learning*, which concerns factors like the organizational framework within which learning is taking place, whether or not the learners are living in the target language community, and if they are not, what opportunities they have to use their target language.

3 *Teaching*, which embraces syllabus definition, materials development, classroom methodology, and the provision and exploitation of resources.

4 *The learning process*, which involves not only the conscious strategies that learners employ but also the unconscious pro-cesses that underpin all language acquisition, like generalization, transfer and simplification.

5 *The outcome of learning* - in other words, the proficiency that learners achieve in listening, speaking, reading and writing - which is typically studied with reference to learners' errors, their interlanguage (that is, their internalized approximation to the target language system), and their affective reactions to learning.

I want now to enlarge on each of these elements in terms of what I have said about media and media technologies. First, as far as the learner is concerned, we need to recognize just how much of his or her L_1 communicative experience is likely to come from the media and to be shaped by them. It is probably fair to say that most inhabitants of western Europe derive the greater part of their world knowledge from broadcast media. Some information is communicated to them more or less directly, by telling and showing, as in news bulletins, current affairs programmes, and features of all kinds (it may well be partial or biased information, but that is another matter); other information is mediated more or less indirectly, embedded (for instance) in the lyrics of a pop song or the attitudes and as-

sumptions that determine the structure of a chat show or a quiz programme. If it is true that pupils at school often seem alienated from the educational process in which they are meant to be involved, that may be partly because our educational system still depends to such a large extent on the modes of communication that characterized the first of our three historical ages. As far as foreign languages are concerned, it should be clear (as I have already suggested) that a learning experience which seeks to develop the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing independently of target language media will not necessarily strike learners as being strongly rooted in everyday reality. Of course, conversation remains the central communicative activity for all of us. But the conversations that learners have each day in their mother tongue take place in a communicative environment significantly shaped by the media, which provide them with themes to talk about and attitudes to express and respond to. Thus the question arises, if we want to teach foreign languages for communication, how realistic is it to attempt to do so without using the media?

Because the media are so central to the communicative experience of developed societies, they are inevitably an important part of the wider learning environment that such societies provide for visitors whose purpose is to learn their language. Not only are the media readily available; to some extent they can be left to do their work independently of formal instruction, in the learners' spare time. Of course, when a language is being learned at a distance from the target language community, the situation is quite different. We must then make special arrangements to bring target language media into the immediate learning environment of the classroom. The *Authentik* newspapers and cassettes offer a solution to this problem based on printed journalism and, to a limited extent, radio; satellite television offers another solution.

What I have said about the learner and the context of learning amounts to the claim that because the media are so central to the learner's communicative experience in his mother tongue, to the extent that they have the same centrality for members of the target language community, they should also be central to the learner's experience of the target language. The third of the five elements in the language learning/teaching process is teaching, which (as we saw) is concerned with such issues as syllabus definition, materials development, classroom method, and resources for learning. At the level of syllabus definition we can specify the kinds of media communication that successful learners should be able to cope with

as part of their target language repertoire. What we say about media and media technologies in relation to materials development, classroom method and resources for learning, however, will depend on our view of the learning process.

Research into first and "naturalistic" second language acquisition has shown that although learners progress at different rates, they all follow much the same route as regards the internalization of many crucial syntactic and morphological features of the language in question. "Natural orders of acquisition" have also been found to apply in the case of classroom learners, though formal instruction can help them to compensate for gaps in their internalized knowledge, especially when they are engaged on communicative tasks that allow time for planning and revision. These findings suggest that language teaching will be successful to the extent that it promotes unconscious acquisition processes; and research has also shown that acquisition processes are more likely to be stimulated by a focus on meaning than by a preoccupation with linguistic form. (For brief reviews of language acquisition research in relation to second and foreign language teaching, see Little et al. 1988, Little (ed.) 1989.)

Traditionally, language teaching carried on at a distance from the target language community (which, of course, is most language teaching) has attempted to teach the language now in the hope that the learners may be able to put it to some communicative use in the future. By contrast, communicative approaches to language teaching insist on using the target language as a medium of communication from the very beginning. It is often argued that this makes it much easier for learners to find a purpose for learning. This is certainly the case; but equally important is the point that all learning, including language learning, can take place *only* through communication.

In my discussion of media I distinguished between reciprocal and non-reciprocal modes of communication, but suggested that *all* communication is interactive, either in a social or in an internalized psychological sense. Formal instruction typically mediates non-reciprocal texts - the course book, teacher talk - within a framework of reciprocal communication between teacher and learners. The role of the teacher is to help the learners to engage in the crucial internal, psychological interaction between new material and what they already know. Recent work on the role of communication in education (Barnes 1976 is a *locus classicus*) has emphasized the importance of allowing learners a fair share of initiatives in the negotiation

of meaning that makes up a lesson; for only in this way will they have the best possible chance of integrating new information with what they already know. Clearly, this is as important for foreign languages as for any other subject. But in the foreign language classroom what should "new knowledge" consist of? Traditionally this question has been answered in terms of target language grammar; and, as Devitt (1989) has shown, this continues to be the answer in many would-be communicative classrooms. But what we now know about the importance of unconscious acquisition processes demands a different kind of answer. Language learning requires content that can be described in non-linguistic terms: content like newspaper and magazine articles, books about almost anything, short stories, novels, poems; but also content such as can be provided by the electronic media, especially radio and television broadcasts.

If the media can supply significant content materials for language learning, media technologies can help to drive the interactive processes by which learners digest the content. As we have seen, an audio or video recorder enables the teacher or learner to receive extended audio or video texts in small doses; and those small doses can be embedded in reciprocal communication between teacher and learners. The process of digesting content material involves a great deal more, of course, than comprehension, however thorough. If learners are to derive maximum benefit from content materials they must also exploit them in a variety of productive activities. Like newspaper articles, radio and television broadcasts can provide the raw materials for a wide variety of spoken and written activities - informal discussions, debates, role-plays, sketches, etc., on the one hand; letters, classroom surveys, written reports, etc., on the other. (For a systematic treatment of techniques for the exploitation of authentic texts, see Little et. al. 1988, Chapter 3.)

All of these activities can be given an extra stimulus by putting media technologies directly in the hands of the learners. For example, a classroom survey can be given added interest by recording interviews on an audio cassette recorder; while a role-play or sketch will be much more thoroughly prepared and realized if it is to be the subject of a video recording. Making recordings of the learners using the target language (the outcome of learning) also offers a means of helping them to develop techniques of self-monitoring and self-assessment.

Finally, the computer can be used both to present and to pro-cess content materials. There is always a strong temptation to think of the

computer as a surrogate teacher; and it is true that many of the computer programs developed for use in the language classroom are closely modelled on the discourse structure of the "frontal" classroom, where the teacher asks a question, the learners answer, and the teacher evaluates the answer and then asks another question. The essential difference between the computer and the teacher is, of course, that the computer is incapable of tuning its evaluations to the needs of the individual learner. Much more interesting are computer applications that present and process texts in such a way as to focus on meaning, or on form, or on their interdependence (the Autotutor interactive video system is a special case of this kind; see Hélène Conway-Mouret's contribution to this volume). Finally, non-educational computer applications, like databases and word-processing programs, can be used to help learners through the succession of interactive pro-cesses that lead to the production of written or printed text.

Implications for language learning in Ireland

My argument so far can be summarized as follows:

1 Media are central to our communicative experience in the real world.

2 In second and foreign language learning, media are principal sources of the content, or input, on which unconscious language acquisition processes feed.

3 We need media technologies in the language classroom not only because they are the means by which we present certain media texts (content or input) to our learners, but also because in their own right they can stimulate the processes of social and psychological interaction on which learning depends.

But how central are media and media technologies to present language teaching practice in Ireland? Certainly there is by now very widespread use of the *Authentik* newspapers and cassettes in French, German and Spanish. But *Authentik* apart, media and media technologies seem not to play a central role. Until recently many language classrooms remained in the first of my three ages of communication, dependent on printed texts and "live" talk between teacher and pupils. Although language laboratories have been around for almost thirty years, one mostly hears them referred to as white elephants, dusty and unused. The advent of listening comprehension in the public examinations has apparently not led to their resurgence,

though it has made the audio cassette recorder a familiar item of equipment in most language classrooms, which thus find themselves in my second age of communication. The number of language teachers using pre-recorded video or broadcast television materials remains quite small, though there are signs of a breakthrough here and there, especially in French and Irish (see the contributions of Helen Ó Murchú and Tony Weymes to this volume). As for computers, their use in the language classroom remains very much in its infancy. In other words, most classrooms remain a long way removed from the communicative realities of the world outside.

In order to make significant progress towards those realities we need syllabuses in which coping with media is part of the communicative repertoire learners are expected to develop. We also need significant investment in both teacher education and technical facilities. And we need to look closely at the physical arrangements that we make for language teaching. Most schools distinguish between subjects that are taught in special rooms because they have special requirements, and subjects that can be taught anywhere. Second and foreign languages usually fall into the latter category - the physical and methodological separation of the language laboratory from other language classrooms helps to explain its neglect. But second and foreign language learning needs a dedicated environment just as much as Chemistry or Metalwork or Home Economics. Language learning would be a much more exciting prospect, and arguably a much more effective process, if it went on in rooms where the different media technologies were all available together. Obviously, language learning that belongs to my third age of communication can *only* go on in such a multi-media environment.

Classroom research as a way forward

Raising the necessary funds for large-scale educational innovation requires so much effort that there is a tendency to equate the eventual securing of funds with innovation itself. This helps to explain why so few educational innovations are properly monitored and evaluated. However, I do not believe that the best way forward in our particular instance is to bombard the government with demands for a computer network in every language classroom, a satellite dish on every school roof, and block-release arrangements to enable all language teachers to attend regular in-service seminars during school hours. For one thing, we know what the answer would be;

for another, innovation on this scale would be immensely difficult to monitor and evaluate.

The findings of research into language acquisition, language processing and language use convince me that our ultimate goal should be the kind of multi-media language learning environment I have sketched in this presentation. But I am equally convinced that we need to proceed gradually, by devising and monitoring small-scale classroom projects that permit us to test and refine aspects of the theoretical model we are seeking to implement. Projects focussed on the use of media and media technologies in second and foreign language teaching would have much to tell us, not only about problems of pedagogical implementation but also about how language learners psychologically interact with media, in other words, how they learn from them. Small-scale projects have two notable advantages: they cost relatively little, and they can be carefully monitored and evaluated; and of course, success on a small scale, especially when it can be substantiated by careful evaluation, immediately becomes an argument for implementation on a larger scale. It is easy for a government to reject requests for funding when they are based entirely on theory, but much less easy when theory is supported by research that has been conducted locally. This seminar owes its existence to the conviction that systematic and long-term progress in second and foreign language teaching depends on a strong alliance between applied linguists and teachers. Here in Ireland the challenge of media and media technologies - the need to bring language teaching into the third of my ages of communication - might provide the initial focus for just such an alliance.

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Using audio and the language laboratory

Christine Hélot
Saint Patrick's College
Maynooth

Introduction

This paper will concentrate mainly on the role of the language laboratory in language teaching and learning today. The term audio in the title is meant to cover one type of technology and is used as distinctive from video but does not mean that use of audio equipment excludes the use of video or indeed computer equipment with it.

Four main aspects of audio technology and its relationship to language learning will be discussed:

1 The technological aspect: what a language lab is and what kinds of labs are available in Ireland.

2 The research aspect: what kind of research is being carried out today into language laboratories, how they are used, how they could be used, and in what ways they benefit the language learning process.

3 The pedagogical aspect: how learning and teaching in the language lab must change in order to become part of a communicative language teaching approach. This part will also point to the fact that a language lab should not be just a teaching device but a teaching and indeed a learning aid.

4 The practical aspect: what we have been doing in the Language Centre in St Patrick's College, Maynooth, with particular reference to the Irish language.

The main argument running through the paper is that the technology has by no means been exploited sufficiently so far.

The technological aspect: what is a language lab?

There are two main types of language lab, audio-active (AA) and audio-active-comparative (AAC).

AA labs are made in Ireland by MTL Electronics and have been installed mostly in secondary schools. They consist of a teacher's console, which includes two audio cassette recorders with a copying facility, a microphone, and an intercom system which enables the teacher to communicate either with one student or with the whole class, and any number of student positions with headsets. Students in such a lab can listen and repeat. Older models can be updated and a video facility incorporated.

AAC labs are more sophisticated. They comprise a teacher's console from which all or some of the booths can be controlled, and any number of student booths controllable by the students themselves when required. The students' cassette recorders have a teacher's or source track, which is recorded from the console and which the student cannot erase, and a student track, which records from the student's microphone and which the student can erase at will.

AAC labs also include many other facilities, of which the most useful are: the intercom facility, which enables the teacher to communicate with one student, a group of students, or the whole class; the fast-copying facility, which enables the teacher to copy a pre-recorded program at speed; and the conference facility, which enables all students in the lab to communicate with one another without having to take their headsets off. Of course, these labs also include the possibility of using external program sources such as slides or video programs, which can accompany whatever exercises the teacher has prepared on audio tape. The three main manufacturers of AAC labs selling in Ireland are Tandberg (Norway), ASC (West Germany), and Sony.

Despite the fact that so many people in the 1970s thought language labs were going to disappear, the technology has been developing all the time and labs seem to be here to stay. When first designed at the beginning of the 1950s, language labs worked with reel-to-reel tapes (the first lab was designed by Al Hayes at Louisiana State University). In the 1970s they changed markedly with the invention of the audio cassette, miniaturization of components, and the computerization of controls. Today, Sony manufactures language labs with digital systems (i.e. discs similar to compact discs) instead of cassettes, video monitors and computer keyboards all

included in the student booth.

Such technology, of course, can only be expensive, and this brings me to the first question teachers or school principals are asking themselves today. Language labs cost a lot of money: are they worth it? The question cannot be answered simply but I hope to begin to answer it in this paper.

The research aspect

Language labs were originally devised to be an integral part of audio-lingual and audio-visual teaching methods. The emphasis that these methods put on near-native pronunciation as well as on acquiring the basic structures of the target language gave a central role to repetition and structure drills, and the language lab was the ideal place to do this type of work. Indeed, most audio-visual courses published at that time included a set of exercises to be done in the lab - we all remember *La France en Direct*, for example. While these exercises were for the most part well-designed, well-graded and well-controlled, teachers often found that students who could perform quite well in the constrained situation of the lab had difficulties using these structures in an informal situation outside the lab.

Today, materials produced for language teaching rarely mention that there could be such a place as a language lab, and very little work is being done on its usefulness or efficacy. It is striking, for example, that while *Un Niveau Seuil* (Coste et al. 1976) gives great importance to recorded authentic materials, it never mentions a language laboratory.

Let me summarize what I have found in the last ten years concerning language learning and the language laboratory.

In 1981 a conference took place specifically on that subject in Montreal and the proceedings were published in the journal *Speak* (vol. 4, no.3/4).

In 1983, E. Kleinschmidt and P. Neubold carried out a survey among approximately 2,000 teachers in 300 schools in Germany. Their aim was to show that most teachers were unaware of the kinds of exercises one can do in a lab, that their knowledge of the technical and didactic functions of the lab was insufficient to help foreign language learning, that they did not know at which stage of the teaching process they should use their lab, that the integration of lab work in the teaching process caused difficulties, and finally that teachers did not have enough information about the kinds of materials available for use in a language laboratory. The answers to their questionnaire showed that the most widely used types of exercises were

imitation exercises and pattern drills, then listening comprehension exercises. Exercises involving free production of speech were almost never used as teachers said they did not know how to use them. On average teachers mentioned the name of two programmes for the lab, and no programme was mentioned more than ten times, which meant that a lot of materials were available but teachers were not well informed about them. Generally, teachers were found to restrict themselves to course books, which is probably true not only of language teachers. Kleinschmidt and Neubold concluded that the language lab was not used to its fullest potential and that teacher training courses should include a training program for working with the language lab. However, most teachers said they felt that the curriculum was too tight to include language lab work and other media in general.

In 1984 Pergamon published a book by Philip Ely entitled *Bring the Lab Back to Life*, which gives examples of different types of exercises that can be done in the lab. His aim is to introduce some spontaneity into the lab *via* stimulating and enjoyable activities and even to promote communication between students. The exercises are presented in three parts, covering first activities requiring accurate listening comprehension with a simple or graphic response, then activities requiring accurate communication of comprehensible information, and last, activities in which the students must give appropriate and spontaneous responses to a series of stimuli. The book presents very many stimulating exercises and should be on the shelves of every language lab.

In 1985 David Bedford carried out a survey of students' attitudes towards the language lab at the Southern Illinois University of Carbondale and found that students had an initially positive attitude in the first semester which became negative in the second semester. Bedford stressed the importance of designing new and stimulating materials for the lab.

The only article I have found looking at the role and place of the language lab in a third-level language course is by Gordon Doble in a CILT publication entitled *Oral Skills in the Modern Language Degree* (1985). Two interesting diagrams show different ways in which activities taking place in a lab can be integrated with other language learning activities.

The pedagogical aspect

The first part of this paper described briefly the technological revolution

which has taken place since the 1970s in the design and conception of language labs. A similar revolution has taken place in the field of methodology: the four-phase structure drills based on behaviourist conceptions of language learning have been replaced by an emphasis on using real and authentic language in a meaningful context. We have also changed our attitudes towards the learning process - the learner's needs are taken into consideration; towards the teaching process - receptive activities are developed at an early stage and teachers are expected to tolerate errors; and towards language, which is no longer viewed as a universal and impersonal phenomenon but as an instrument of communication which is individual, personal and necessarily situated in a social context.

Furthermore, if one considers the four main skills involved in language learning, a shift took place in the 1960s from the importance of reading and writing to the primacy of listening and speaking. But as Hans-Eberhard Piepho pointed out in the talk he gave in Dublin in January 1989 (Piepho 1990), most adult and adolescent learners find reading in a second language fairly easy, writing less difficult and demanding than speaking, and listening difficult and frustrating.

It seems to me that this is the very point where language labs have a role to play. Listening and understanding a second language in a learning context can take place with a teacher, with a tape (audio or video) in a classroom, in your home or car or with your walkman, or sitting in a language lab. Obviously, it is not where you listen which is important, but how you listen and what you listen to.

The first thing to stress is the importance of listening. Listening is what we do most frequently in our daily life. There is not total agreement among researchers, but it seems that on average we spend 50% of our time listening, 25% speaking, 15% reading and 10% writing. Weaver (1972) writes:

> For several centuries we have devoted our study and teaching to the expressive part of the communicative process which we use only half as much as we use the receptive skills. Most people are unaware of the amount of time they spend listening. After all listening is neither so dramatic nor so noisy as talking. The talker is the centre of attraction for all listeners.

There are many reasons why the listening activity has been neglected, one of them being that listening has been wrongly considered to be a

passive activity. Indeed, we still don't know really how we listen and understand as these are very complex phenomena. And since the 1970s many new methods have been based on listening, for example, Total Physical Response or the methods based on Suggestopaedia. However, it is not my purpose to discuss these approaches here.

Going back to the language lab, it seems to me that it is an excellent facility for promoting the activity of listening. Why? First of all, because each learner has an individual headset the sound quality will be better than with a tape recorder used in a classroom. If you hear better, you can listen better and have a better chance of understanding. Also, I believe that sitting in a language lab, students will focus their attention much better than in a classroom. Thirdly, and most important perhaps, the language lab can answer individual needs, i.e., students can work at their own pace, even at their own level, and this is certainly not possible with a single tape recorder or even several tape recorders in a classroom.

For the teacher, finding materials for students to listen to will not be difficult as much is available on the market, and recordings from the radio are easily copied. *Authentik* provides excellent recordings five times a year in the European languages principally taught in second-level schools in Ireland.

However, listening is not sufficient: the teacher must have some way of assessing whether students understand what they are listening to. Exercises must be designed to help students to understand the authentic recording and test their comprehension. Most communicative courses produced today include listening comprehension exercises which can be done in the classroom or, better, in the language lab - *Themen* and *Deutsch Aktiv Neu* for German, *Le Nouveau Sans Frontières*, *Salut!*, and *Archipel* for French, among others. Most of these exercises are based on authentic recordings where the speed can often cause difficulties to learners and doing them in a lab would enable each student to listen as many times as necessary.

But listening to and understanding the target language is not sufficient. Speaking the language is the main aim of most language learners and one can object that the language lab is not an ideal environment for real communication or group work. But at no stage have I suggested that all language teaching should take place in the language lab. The language lab should be considered as one of the available resources for language teaching and should have a particular place in a language teaching pro-

gram, perhaps for pre-communicative activities or for testing what has been taught previously. Another advantage of the language lab is that it can be used at all levels of language learning, including beginners.

Finding pre-recorded materials to encourage learners to produce the target language in the language laboratory is much more difficult. There is a scarcity of available material which may reflect a lack of interest in such technology as it has turned out not to be the panacea that most people wrongly thought it would be. Another reason is that producing such materials is extremely time-consuming and costly if it does not answer the needs of many learners.

Among the materials I know and have used myself, one example of an excellent course is *Prenez la Parole* (Clé International, 1982). The course is designed to be used in a classroom or in a lab, and comprises a book and an audio tape. The book contains illustrations and information without which it is not possible to do the exercises. This visual support is excellent for presenting learners with a real situation in a clear context, which will be the basis for role-play activities in the lab (see Unit 6, for example). Among other kinds of activities involving speaking which can be done in the language lab are pre-communicative activities. Again there are many examples in *Prenez la Parole* (see Unit 1, for example).

Le Français chez les Français is another course that I have found works very well in the lab with students of French. It was produced in Germany and all the exercises are based on authentic recordings made in France. It is more advanced than *Prenez la Parole* - I use it with second-year university students.

If one considers the different learning strategies involved in second language acquisition, the distinction made by Dulay and Burt (1981) between three phases of communication is useful for designing different activities not only for the classroom but also for the lab. Dulay and Burt distinguish between 1) "one-way communication", for example, reading or listening to the target language, 2) "partial two-way communication", when people answer by nodding their head or using their mother tongue, and 3) "full two-way communication", when speakers must listen, understand and answer in the target language. Examples of exercises involving these three phases of communication are:

1 Discrimination exercises such as: "Mark whether you heard *Il est français* or *Elle est française*".

2 True/false exercises which can also include cultural information, as well as a phonemic distinction, for example: *Tous les ans a lieu à Cannes un festival de cinéma - réponse: vrai; Tous les ans a lieu à Cagnes un festival de cinéma - réponse: faux.*

3 The examples mentioned above from *Prenez la Parole.*

How these different types of activity are conducted in the lab will depend on whether an AA lab or an AAC lab is available. Types 1 and 2 can easily be done in an AA lab, whereas type 3 is done more usefully in an AAC lab, where students can record their responses, compare them with a possible answer, and evaluate their performance.

Depending on the circumstances, a lab can be a private study resource to which students have free access for different types of language learning activities, or a sophisticated teaching aid at the service of a tutor. In the first case, one should be reminded that students are capable of working on their own and should be expected to do so, particularly at third level. The language lab can then be a source of self-help, offering a wide variety of authentic materials and graded exercises.

The role of the tutor in the language laboratory will depend on the kind of materials used (some exercises cannot be done without a tutor) and on the attitude of the students. I have often noticed how the "call teacher" facility is under-used by most students in the language lab and feel they should be trained to use it more often.

Just as in the communicative classroom, the teacher should not be at the centre of the learning experience, sitting as a spy controlling students, but should play the role of "facilitator". Error tolerance should be shown so as not to inhibit students, particularly when speaking. Pronunciation need not be corrected unless it prevents understanding, and most of all, speaking exercises should not all demand "set" responses; some spontaneity must be possible in the lab although it is not easy to achieve the necessary balance between the repeated "correct answer" and a "free approach". As Ely (1984) asks:

> Why is it that, in many lab situations, human beings are herded into little compartments and turned into parrots? ... Why should they invariably have to say what their machines want them to?

As well as encouraging spontaneity, exercises in the lab should be stimulating and enjoyable. *La vie en France*, a very old oral comprehension

course designed for the lab in 1971, is non-authentic, but it has a civilisation content and is full of humour, little songs, puns and jokes, and teachers and students equally enjoy working with it.

At this point I should like to mention music. It is very easy in the lab to introduce songs between exercises or at the beginning or end of a program. Having recently listened to some "accelerated learning" courses where dialogues are recorded with a musical background, I have wondered about applying the same idea in the lab: instead of having just a song at the end of the tape, putting instrumental music as a background to the exercises.

The practical aspect

In the Language Centre at St Patrick's College, Maynooth, we have been trying to put into practice most of the ideas presented above. While our courses in French and German are mostly compilations of pre-recorded materials, we had no such choice for Irish and have spent the last two years putting together an Irish course which we have called *Dúshlán*. This is a comprehension course for post-Leaving Certificate students - in other words, first-year university students - and is specifically designed for use in the language lab. However, it could also be used with a tape recorder in a classroom or by adult learners wishing to improve their knowledge of Irish on their own.

Dúshlán is based on authentic recordings of Irish speakers from the various Gaeltachta and of other (non-native) speakers of the language. The recordings were collected over one year and transcribed in their entirety. Some of them were very kindly supplied to us by Raidió na Gaeltachta. They present a wide variety of topics, ranging from current affairs to various aspects of contemporary life, both urban and rural, and were chosen to appeal to young people.

The *Dúshlán* project originated from a questionnaire which was circulated to all undergraduates studying Irish at Maynooth. An analysis of the answers given in the questionnaire highlighted specific topics which were of interest to the students, and this helped to determine the nature of the material to be used in the compilation of such a course.

The design of *Dúshlán* recognises the separate needs of each of the three main dialects - Connaught, Ulster, and Munster - by providing separate course materials for each of them. The same approach and structure were used for each set of materials, but because they are based on authentic

recordings, the three sets differ considerably in their content. Each set of materials comprises a total of seventeen units, lasting on average twenty minutes each. Each unit begins with an introduction in Irish which presents the speaker and summarises the subject of his or her conversation. The interview itself is then given in three parts, each part being followed by three or four short exercises. These exercises are very varied and range from global comprehension to filling in blanks, multiple choice, and substitution and transformation drills. They were designed to improve aural and oral skills, to increase vocabulary, and to develop an awareness of grammatical difficulties. The exercises are based on the authentic recordings, which means that they are contextualised; and the questions or tasks are meaningful, so that they should help to develop learners' communicative ability. Many exercises involve the students actively by giving them the opportunity to talk about themselves and their own experiences.

Dúshlán also recognises the need to promote a greater understanding of the various dialects. This is why we included an exercise in which students are asked to recognise, then reproduce in their own dialect, sentences they have heard in one of the three dialects in the original interview.

We are now in the process of recording the exercises and will be implementing and evaluating *Dúshlán* during the coming year. Some of the units were evaluated, however, as the course was being compiled. Finally, one point should be made about producing language materials whether for the language lab or for other technologies, and that is the amount of time (it has taken us the best part of three years), energy and imagination such a project demands. In other words, people responsible for allocating funds to purchase whatever kind of equipment, should not forget that funds should also be made available for the production of materials without which the technology is obviously useless.

Conclusion

The role of the laboratory as an educational instrument will only develop with the progress of research because it is not the technology but the pedagogical use of the technology that determines the effectiveness of the lab.

Language labs in the past have been misused and under-used, and this is the main reason for their unpopularity and questionable efficacy. Nonetheless, I believe that language laboratories have a definite contribution to

make to second language learning in the 1990s and after, particularly if they are enriched by video and computer technology and if they function as resource centres that supplement classroom work and offer exposure to real language through authentic audio and video documents.

Materials used in language laboratories are the key factor in determining the effectiveness of the lab as a tool to aid second language acquisition and learning. The task facing users of language laboratories is to develop imaginative and pedagogically sound materials and then to test them: to evaluate their effect on students' attitudes towards the lab, and above all to evaluate their effect on the language proficiency of learners.

Finally, the language laboratory should be integrated into a clear methodology or teaching approach, where it can have an essential part in the whole rather than being a bit "added on". This obviously implies a clear understanding of what the language lab can contribute to the learning process. More research needs to be done before we can formulate a general theory for the use of language labs.

The aim of this paper was to convince teachers and learners of second languages that, if given the chance, the language laboratory could make a larger impact than at present on second language learning and could earn its keep more significantly. Let's just hope that the attractions of computers and video will not divert attention from it.

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Issues in the use of video technology in the language classroom

Mary Ruane
Department of Education
University College
Dublin

Introduction

The definition of video taken for the purposes of this paper is broad: it refers to any form of language-teaching material that can be shown on a television monitor. It covers, therefore, not just teaching materials specifically designed for commercial distribution on videocassette, but also programmes designed to be broadcast either on traditional terrestrial channels or *via* satellite, as well as materials which may originally be broadcast but are then distributed commercially on videocassette in the form of multi-media language-teaching materials. This working definition of video excludes reference to language-teaching materials which interlink keyboard and screen, i.e. interactive video, not because these are of lesser importance in language teaching pedagogy, but because it would not be possible to deal with their implications in the space available.

The paper is divided into two sections. The first section, the main part of the paper, contains an outline of a possible pedagogical framework for video in language learning, and the second section examines the question of access to video materials in view of some of the pedagogical considerations outlined.

A possible pedagogical framework for video in language teaching

Looking at developments in second language acquisition theory in recent years, the role of video can be summarized in two ways. Firstly, video documents should be seen as a source of language input for students - essentially a means of providing them with extensive exposure to instances of the target language. In this context, input is taken to mean instances of the

target language to which students are exposed by means of listening or reading texts. Secondly, video documents can be used as a way of developing learner competence in particular language skills. Included here are not just the skills of viewing or listening comprehension, which tend to be the language skills most frequently associated with video, but also those of speaking, writing and even reading.

Let us first examine the role of video as a source of language input. Recent studies in acquisition theory have shown that instructing pupils in a foreign language, i.e. requiring of them that they master rules and have a conscious understanding of how language functions, does not play as crucial a role in successful language learning as was once thought. Pupils can also acquire a great deal of language through subconscious processes, basically using the faculties that enabled them to learn their mother tongue in the first place. Such subconscious processes are likely to be best activated, according to acquisition theorists such as Krashen (1982, 1985) and Krashen & Terrell (1983), both by arranging that learning takes place in language-rich, natural environments and by providing the right kind of source material.

In view of these theoretical findings - which I believe also correspond with the classroom experience of the majority of practitioners - one of the main tasks facing language teachers today is to seek out materials which provide good opportunities for pupils to acquire or, to use the appropriate non-technical term, "pick up" the language. A lot of work has been done in identifying the characteristics good input documents should have (Krashen 1982). These characteristics do not describe the documents *per se* but the kind of criteria that should apply when selecting documents for use in class. Documents which allow input are likely to be strong on affective appeal; they are chosen because of their interest value to the learners rather than the type of structure or vocabulary they contain; they are not grammatically sequenced; at the same time, they are not likely to be much beyond the level of the pupils; finally, they provide lots of contextual support to facilitate comprehension.

Given these characteristics, it is easy to see how video can be such a good source of input material, arguably one of the best there is. It is useful, at this point, to consider in detail some of the main reasons why video documents are such a good source of language input.

Firstly, in a way that other media forms cannot, video documents can show us something near the integrality of spoken and interactive discourse

and they can do this in extremely stimulating and entertaining ways. By comparison, and for reasons which are self-evident, audio documents are much more limited. On video, all the elements in communication can be illustrated, including relationships, reactions, moods, place, personae, etc. Though the statement has become something of a cliché, it does bear repeating: video brings the foreign country into the classroom and places language in context. Above all, however, video demonstrates the close interrelationship between aural and visual channels in communication and ensures that we have access to the full range of non-verbal and extralinguistic sources of meaning which are so important in interaction (Riley 1985).

Secondly, television screens compel attention whether at home, in public or in class. Once student attention is engaged and held by a particular video extract, language will be acquired. Research has shown that retention of material shown on television is related to what is called "depth of processing", that is, the extent to which the viewer is prepared to invest mental effort in the viewing (Craik & Lockhart 1972, Salomon 1984). The effort invested is in turn related to the degree of meaningfulness for the viewer of what is shown on screen. This proposition applies to general learning from television, but in my view it may apply to language learning as well. When the right video document is shown at the right moment to a class that is ready to receive it, pupils can "pick up" whole chunks of language seemingly without effort. In some cases the acquisition process can be so complete that there is no evidence of an interlanguage stage during which learners try to master the elements. It is important to note too that this language is not memorized. It is acquired simply as a result of viewing and without any intervention by the teacher. The language is taken in and disappears, only to resurface, like an underground river, in most unexpected but entirely appropriate contexts.

The impression should not be created that every piece of video works in this way, nor should pretentious claims be made for video. The extent to which the language will be acquired will depend on the impact and quality of a particular document. Clearly, the average evening news bulletin will not have the same televisual impact as, let us say, a striking and technically well-executed television advertisement, where extensive cinematic techniques are deployed to produce maximum lasting effect in a few seconds' viewing. In the case of the former, maybe only the headlines or a few key words will be absorbed, and this with possibly short-term retention. In the

case of a short piece of video with strong visual and emotional appeal, however, an entire discourse pattern may be assimilated and retained over a longer period of time.

This language assimilation process has been observed with sections of the *Kaléidoscope* video kit (Ruane et al. 1987, 1989) now being used by second-level teachers of French in Irish schools. In sequences found to be particularly appealing and interesting by pupils, chunks of language were acquired very effectively and re-emerged, sometimes after considerable time had elapsed, in a range of different contexts. This happened to the astonishment of the class-teachers, who realized that they had actually taken no active part in their pupils' learning process and had certainly not formally instructed (or drilled) their pupils in the language points in question. Their role had been simply to create the appropriate conditions for viewing and to ensure that the sequence selected was one that the learners would find enjoyable at a particular time and that there were matching viewing guides to help them follow what was going on.

Lastly, there is the association between video and entertainment which also contributes enormously to motivation and good relations in a classroom, what Krashen (1982) calls the low-anxiety, tension-free atmosphere. Most learners are positively predisposed to television and believe that it can contribute to their learning. As an illustration of this, it is interesting to observe the numbers of pupils at second level who pressurize their teachers to "show us a video" or the number of adult learners who, finding they have to study language on their own, actively seek out video materials believing that these will somehow make the whole process easier and certainly more pleasurable. Though for some teachers (particularly those working in formal education at second level) using entertaining video materials in class can cause concern about the breakdown of discipline and control, in general the amusement and relaxation which follow can contribute to motivation and should be harnessed for learning purposes. The real problem with this is finding the right kind of material, material that will be perceived to be interesting and entertaining. If learners have positive attitudes to television, they also have high expectations and demand high (enjoyment!) standards in what they watch. They want to be stimulated, motivated and entertained, they want material resembling the kind of television that they will watch themselves for leisure. This is something we will come to later.

In summary, therefore, video documents can show language in context,

they can engage attention, and they have strong motivational features. For these as well as for other reasons, they are an excellent form of input and can contribute to subconscious acquisition of language.

But watching video must also be an active process. Regardless of how much language is absorbed by looking at a high-quality input source, to use video documents in this way, for passive viewing only, is to exploit only a limited part of their potential. It is also necessary to ensure that learners engage in a range of activities which encourage or require them to use the language for purposes of real communication. Viewed in this way video can become an excellent means for pupils to develop language skills and, as I said earlier, not just one of the language skills but all of them, listening, speaking, writing and even reading.

Applied linguists such as Allwright (1984) Ellis (1985), Littlewood (1981, 1984), and Prabhu (1987), place a high value on the role of communicative activities in acquiring language. They see a more reduced role for input in the acquisition process. In varying degrees and with varying nuances, the claim of all these theorists is that pupils acquire language when they have to use it in communicative situations. As Little et al. say in their recent work *Authentic Texts in Foreign Language Teaching* (1988), we promote learning not just for but through communicating. The overall aim must be to ensure that learners are occupied in understanding and/or conveying messages. Language forms are important inasmuch as they enable this to happen. Methodologically speaking , this implies a different approach to the use of traditional grammatical exercises, which require the application of particular rules in phrasal or sentence units independent of context. An approach based on communicative activities calls for an emphasis on problem-solving, task completion, interrelating information and inferencing - not in relation to linguistic forms but in relation to semantic content. Learner output in the target language, in this case, is likely to take the form of completed grids, short reports, presentations of results, flow-charts, surveys, etc. Syllabuses for this kind of approach are likely to take the form not of grammatical or even notional-functional points, but of an inventory of activities, procedures or tasks (Prabhu 1987).

Arising from this, the question is whether video can provide good resource material on which to base activities and tasks for communication. I believe it can, for a number of reasons.

Firstly, because video documents are first-rate "trigger" documents. If learners are to interact in class, if they are to engage in meaning-related

activities, in problem-solving, task completion, they have to have reasons to talk and topics to talk and write about. Carefully chosen video documents can provide powerful images to create the appropriate stimuli: images that will involve the viewers, stimulate, puzzle, captivate, irritate, raise questions, cause confusion, anger, enthrall. All of these responses are the stuff of good interaction in class and can be exploited for language learning purposes through a range of communicative activities. Since video documents are generally viewed by the whole class together, the impact is likely to be all the more powerful.

Secondly, it does not take long to provide the stimulus. Even the briefest sequence can provoke reaction and response, and very complex messages can be communicated very rapidly. Very short sequences, sometimes as short as one or two minutes, can produce teaching material to keep a class going for quite a while - even over a few days - depending on what exercises are used. In recent years, possibly coinciding with recent trends in language teaching, there has been a very definite shift towards using shorter and shorter sequences. A survey on the use of video published by MacKnight (1983) showed that the average lesson time occupied by video was twenty to forty minutes with advanced and intermediate groups, between ten and twenty minutes with elementary groups, and long sequences of forty-five minutes to one hour were not uncommon. Short sequences of five minutes or less were found to be rare, however. A similar survey done to-day (though I do not know whether one has been done) on the use of video within an acquisition perspective would be likely to find very different results. The current tendency is to work with extremely short video sequences or alternatively not to show a video in its original entirety but to take short extracts which are then edited in the form of video clips. As stated above, video sequences can fulfil their function of making an impact in an extremely brief period of time.

Thirdly, an extremely rich range of exercise types can be generated from on-screen material. All the activities which can be used with audio and reading texts can be applied to video, and there are others that are specific to the medium. As video texts are an immensely flexible resource, the same programme can be used for several purposes (making sure, of course, that the document is not flogged to death by playing it over and over again): to practice gist comprehension, to elicit detailed comprehension, to stimulate active oral work, to develop vocabulary, to introduce grammar points etc. (Hill 1984). In doing the various pre-, while-, and post-viewing exercises,

pupils have a constant reference point on the screen which provides them not only with extensive contextual support, but also with the "linguistic capital" they need for production.

Let us turn now to an examination of how the various language skills can be promoted through using video. As I have already argued, all four language skills can be developed with video, and this in any order, as there is no fixed order in which these skills should be taken. Sometimes it may be appropriate to begin work on a video extract with viewing comprehension, sometimes a reading text may precede the video extract, sometimes writing activities may follow directly from viewing, and so on. I shall now examine possible roles for video by looking at examples taken from each of the four skills of language teaching.

It is appropriate to begin with reading because using video in conjunction with reading texts may not seem an obvious use of the medium. The main role for video here is to provide the contextual framework for reading texts. A common and self-evident observation in much that has been written recently about reading in a foreign language is that pupils will find it easier to read material that they have some prior knowledge of and that they have an interest in. As some commentators (Grellet 1981, Alderson 1984) have put it, a high interest level in a text's content can overcome the expected "linguistic difficulty" of a text or the reader's lack of familiarity with a topic. If we can succeed in interesting the students in the content of a text, they are likely to find it more interesting and therefore more accessible. What better way of introducing a reading text than to show a parallel text on video, a short excerpt dealing with the theme or topic contained in the reading text and ideally containing similar vocabulary and linguistic structures?

With regard to writing, let me illustrate the role video can play by taking an example of a fairly standard writing task in a second-level syllabus (my example is taken from a recent French examination at Leaving Certificate, Ordinary Level): "Your name is Seán or Síle de Barra. You live in Kilrush. You forgot your address book at the Youth Hostel in Morlaix in France. Write to the Youth Hostel Director and ask him to send it on to you." Now at the best of times, writing is a difficult activity: it is a solitary process, and the writer has to put him/herself into the mind of both the initiator and the recipient of the message. Writing in a foreign language makes this task all the more demanding. Contextual supports help considerably (Widdowson1983). Had these been supplied in this case, the writer would have had

background information about, firstly, Seán or Síle de Barra, about the youth hostel, about Morlaix, about how the address book came to be lost in the first place. The task would have been easier for the pupil and the final result would no doubt have been better. This is where video comes in: as in the case of reading, it can supply context. It is much easier to write about people you have actually seen and about whom you have formed some impressions, to write about places that you can imagine yourself as having visited, to describe events that you have actually witnessed rather than imagine you have witnessed. Not only will you find it easier, it is also highly likely that you will write better because there is more first-hand experience in what you are writing about.

The opportunities to develop speaking activities from video are so numerous that it is difficult to do them anything but partial justice here. It is probably in this area that video is most useful as it can, as stated earlier, provide much-needed stimuli for speaking in class. Just one example of how the screen can contribute to the development of speech is provided in this next example. We are all familiar with how the engineering of information, opinion and other types of "gaps" in class can contribute to interaction. When pupils do not share the same view of and reaction to an event, topic, situation or person, there is the basis for dispute, disagreement and therefore discussion (Klippel 1984). The creation of such information and opinion "gaps" in class is made much easier by the use of the screen, where complex, ambiguous life-situations can be illustrated in detail.

Finally, the development of listening or viewing comprehension can be achieved very successfully by means of video. As stated earlier, this is one of the more obvious uses for the medium as learners need to be exposed to natural speech in context (Ur 1981). Through video, not only will they find sample materials which will approximate to what they find in real life, but they will also be in a position to help develop their comprehension skills by drawing on all the extra-linguistic, non-vocal elements present in any communicative situation.

Developing the four language skills through video implies an overall interaction structure in class which is illustrated by Figure 1. In this diagram all the elements in the interaction process are represented - the screen, the learner as individual or member of a group, the teacher, and supporting authentic documents. The nature of the interrelationship is also represented: the main relationship is between the screen and the students as the screen is the first source of the interaction; all of the other elements

Video in LT: Organisation of the Learning Process

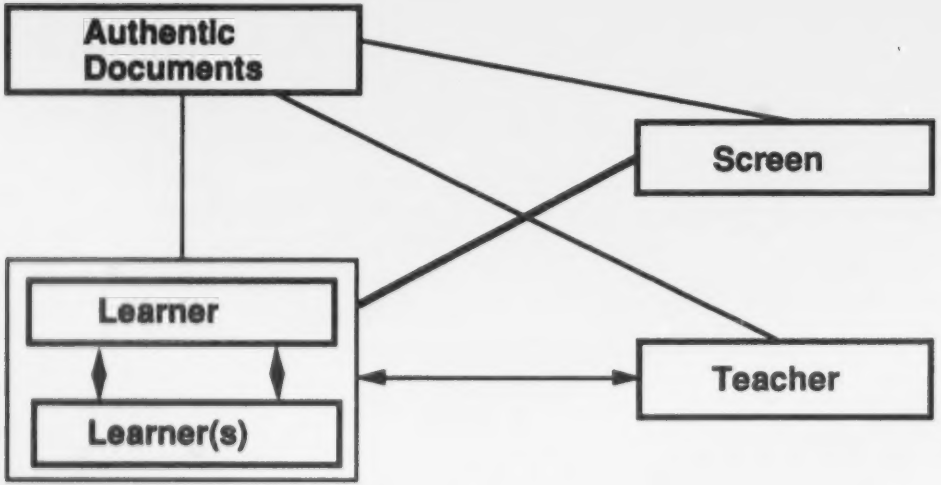
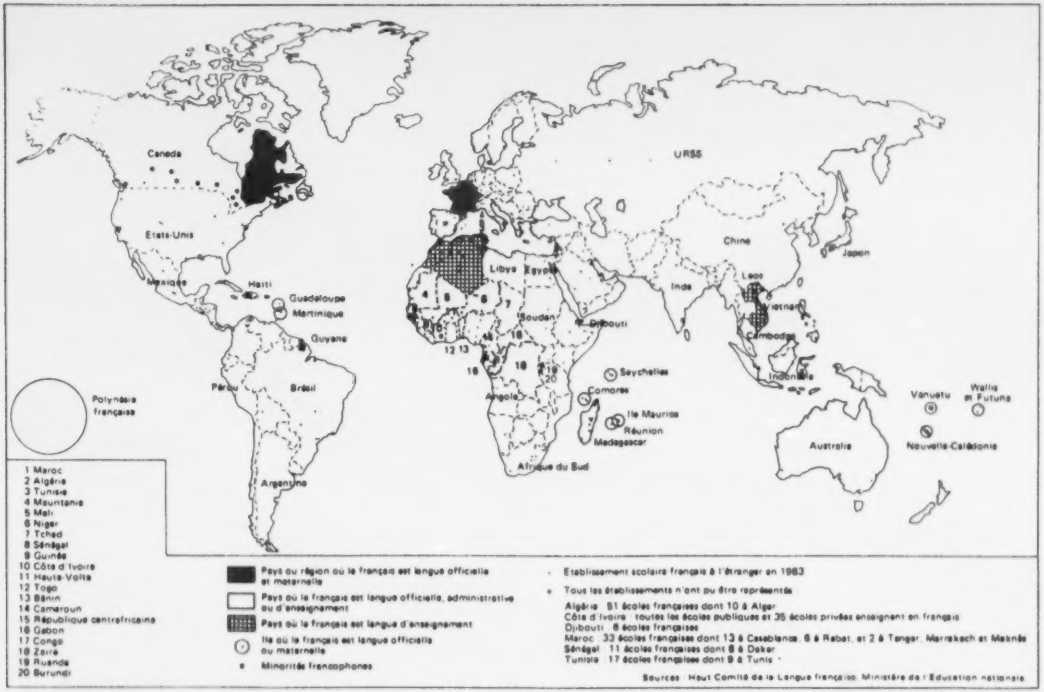


Figure 1

4. Aux quatre coins du monde, on utilise le français pour diverses raisons. Dans le cas de chacun/e des personnes suivantes, essayez d'imaginer trois situations (personnelles et professionnelles) dans lesquelles ils auraient à se servir du français. A l'aide de la carte et de l'autre document de la section "Pour en savoir plus...", remplissez les cadres ci-dessous. (Travail de groupe).

MUASE, Charles Médecin à Kinshasa, au Zaïre.
HUDSON, Mary-Beth Gérante d'entreprise à Ottawa, au Canada.
SINGER, Paolo Fonctionnaire au Ministère des Affaires Etrangères à São Paulo, au Brésil.
HOFFNER, Dietrich Camionneur à Stuttgart, en République Fédérale d'Allemagne.

Figure 2



La langue française dans le monde

Figure 3

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interlink, however - screen with authentic documents, teacher with pupils, pupils with authentic documents, and so on. From this, it is clear that the on-screen stimulus, though central, is but one of several participating elements. Other elements to be emphasized in particular would be the learners' role in the whole process.

By way of conclusion to this section on a pedagogical framework for video, the following is an illustration of how this process - interconnecting video, authentic documents, tasks, teacher and students working individually or in groups - might work in practice. The example is drawn from a sequence in *Kaléidoscope* (Ruane et al. 1987, 1989). The video clip consists of a number of young people, of different nationalities, describing their own language skills and giving their reasons for learning French. The input source on video and in parallel reading texts provides the learners with exposure to the language they need to talk about the topic in question. The learners are then given a task which consists of working out possible professional and personal reasons certain individuals, living in different parts of the world, might have to speak French (see Figure 2). The task is done in groups, the pupils refer to a map (see Figure 3) illustrating the French-speaking world to find out the information they require, and results are written up and then reported back to the class as a whole.

Access to video technology and software

Given the importance of video as a means of developing language acquisition and providing opportunities for interaction in class, it is vital that source material be made available to both teachers and pupils. This introduces the second issue in this paper, the question of access to and availability of video documents in view of the pedagogical perspectives outlined. The problem will be approached in two ways: firstly, by considering in a general way what kind of video documents should be used for language teaching; secondly, by looking at how video documents might be categorized in view of the fact that the aim is the promotion of an acquisition-based approach to video.

Firstly, let me consider the kind of video that should be used in class. Video documents used in language class should resemble the kind of television material learners are used to viewing at home. This basically means using authentic documents recorded off-air and high-quality specially-made pedagogic materials. In this context, it is interesting to note an

Classification of LT Video Materials

- *Video materials specially designed for LT*
- *Semi-pedagogic LT video material*
- *Authentic off-air documents edited for LT*
- *Authentic off-air documents unedited for LT*

Figure 4

observation of Tony Bates (1984) of the Open University to the effect that "good television" does not necessarily lead to effective learning. I see difficulties in applying this view to language learning from television, particularly in an acquisition-based framework. Whereas the role of television in teaching certain subject matters is generally to present content or to explain or reinforce points of information, in language teaching it is to act as an input source and as a stimulus for speech. This means that television must be "good": the material must be interesting, relevant and entertaining, it must be strong on appeal and able to capture attention. Authentic documents must be carefully selected and custom-designed materials must be of a high quality. In particular, this imposes certain technical requirements - productions must be of broadcast or near-broadcast standard; there must be no mismatch between sound and visual elements; there must be interesting camera angles, smooth editing, effective use of music, sound effects, graphics and animation.

Turning now to a classification of video materials in an acquisition-based perspective, what kind of materials are available and which of them are the most suitable? To answer this question it is necessary to classify the range of video materials that are available. There is probably no one satisfactory way of doing this, although several commentators have looked at the problem (Geddes & Sturtridge 1982, McGovern 1983, Allan 1985, Compte 1985, Lancien 1986). Possible ways of classifying video documents are by looking at the target users, delivery systems (whether designed for broadcast, satellite or video), greater and lesser authenticity, etc. An interesting way of classifying them was proposed recently by Thierry Lancien at a seminar in Dublin. His method consisted of categorizing the degree to which the video documents had been didacticized. Figure 4 contains a modification of the Lancien classification and provides some comments on the possible use of each category in an acquisition-based approach to video in language teaching.

Video materials specially designed for language teaching

This category covers video materials designed as "complete courses" for teaching foreign languages, i.e. materials which offer structured, graded progressions based on defined language syllabuses, many of them grammatical. Whilst in some of these courses the pedagogic dimension will not necessarily be apparent, in many of them the didactic element will be so marked that it gets in the way of the content of the programme. Sometimes

the programme-maker or designer even takes over the role of the teacher, establishing one-to-one relationships with the viewer. Course materials of this kind are generally for broadcast use and may also be distributed on video in the form of multi-media packages with supporting students' and viewers' books.

Where these materials have been designed to the highest technical and artistic standards with outstanding scriptwriters and directors - as in the case of many of the productions of the BBC and ITV - these courses can be quite successful, mainly because they are entertaining television. Where the appropriate pedagogic/entertainment balance has not been found - and this is the case in most of the course materials in this category - these documents are highly contrived and will not hold the attention of even the most captive audiences. As they lack this vital "entertainment dimension", they will not serve as good input for acquisition. Unfortunately, there are a lot of video documents of this type and despite their many weaknesses, they are in high commercial demand, if not in this country, in many others.

Semi-pedagogic video materials

These are sometimes in the form of course material. More generally, however, they are ancillary resource documents. In these programmes there is ostensibly no pedagogical or linguistic constraint, the material is unscripted (even if edited), no progression is devised, and the materials are not normally expected to match particular syllabuses. The material is selected because of its relevance and intrinsic, motivational content. For this reason it is very suitable as input. The pedagogical dimension comes from the fact that pedagogues have chosen the exercises or suggested the kinds of topics that might be covered on television. Examples of the kinds of materials here are *Zoom*, *Lyon à la Une*, cartoon materials, and the video material *Kaléidoscope*. These documents are not pedagogically constrained, though there is a pedagogical conception and slant. The absence of a pedagogical or linguistic constraint in making these materials means that they have a high degree of spontaneity and freshness; they can be very entertaining and very different from those of the first category mentioned above. They can also, in my view, serve as good sources of language input.

Authentic off-air documents edited for language teaching

These documents are generally recorded off-air, modified and then used as input for work on the various language skills. An example of

materials in this category is *BBC Newsbrief*, which consists of a once-monthly scripted and edited videotape of a selection of BBC television news items which have appeared internationally. The materials are accompanied by a study pack.

Another extremely interesting example of materials in this category is the Oxford Olympus Language Teaching Project. This also consists of extracts from television news bulletins, recorded off-air and then grouped into multi-media packs comprising edited video clips and also accompanying audio-clips, on-screen teachers' notes, commentaries and printed material. What is interesting about this particular project, however, is the delivery mechanism for both the video and the support material. The on-screen material, including video and sound, will be distributed via the European Space Agency's educational satellite, Olympus, which was launched in the autumn of 1989. Once it begins scheduled broadcasting, both individuals and institutions will be able to access it, though they will need special receivers. Most of the printed material, on the other hand, including exercises, teachers' notes, etc., will be distributed by teletext, with users hopefully able to transfer the material to their own personal computers for further processing. There are to be fifty packs a year, five in each of the languages included in the scheme, and the packs will be designed by groups of teachers working on the materials with a language group leader. I quote this as an example of the way video technology is moving into multi-media systems using advanced technology.

These kinds of materials are very good for acquisition mainly because they are of high quality technically, they present material that is relevant, levels can be controlled, and the supports for the learners are considerable. From the teacher's point of view these materials also have the advantage that they come ready prepared. A pre-selection is made and there is a pedagogical apparatus to support both teachers and pupils. These materials have the disadvantage, however, that they cannot be fully up to date and cannot therefore fully meet pupils' needs. In addition, there is the problem of accessing this material either because one is dependent on the scheduling arrangements of the television stations or because, in the case of satellites, there are difficulties in receiving the material.

Authentic off-air documents unedited for language teaching

Finally, video documents which are recorded off-air but are not processed for pedagogic purposes. The material in this category comprises

extracts from films, documentaries, current affairs programmes and chat-shows, and again provides good material for acquisition. The material can be got from the traditional terrestrial channels or from satellites. It is generally recorded by individuals or groups of teachers in schools, mainly because they want to get up-to-date material, offer pupils programmes they want to see, and vary the sources. As they are raw extracts from longer programmes there is no pedagogical editing.

In many ways these materials are possibly best of all for acquisition - because they are likely to be up to the minute and because they can be chosen to correspond directly to the interests of particular groups of pupils. The problems which arise here are those associated with recording materials, editing them to suit the various requirements, then producing transcripts and exercises. All of this demands a high level of commitment from practitioners. Though these materials may be the most desirable pedagogically, they also pose the greatest number of user problems.

Concluding note

By way of conclusion to this paper, I want to refer back to the two main aims I had at the outset, firstly to describe a pedagogical framework for the use of video in language teaching, and secondly to examine briefly the question of access to video materials. With regard to the first of these, my overall view of how video should be used can be summarized as follows: it is an effective vehicle for developing second language acquisition by providing input and by organizing opportunities for a wide range of communicative activities in the various language skills. As such it has a crucial contribution to make to language teaching, and one that is not, in my view, as much used as it could be.

The fact that an acquisition-based approach to video is as underused as it is may be associated with some of the points that I raised under my second aim: if video is to be used within an acquisition framework it has to be of a high quality, the right kinds of authentic and semi-authentic materials need to be available, teacher supports are required, and possibly above all, there has to be improved access to appropriate hardware for both individual and institutional users. Arranging for all this to happen is no easy task, given the resources that most teachers have at their disposal at present. I hope that it will be possible for us to share views on both these issues - an acquisition-based approach to video and access to materials - in

the course of the rest of today's deliberations.

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Computers in language teaching

Geraldine Kennedy
Centre for Language and Communication Studies
Trinity College
Dublin

Introduction: educational technology, computers, and computer-assisted language learning

The impact of technology on society and on individual lives has increased dramatically in recent decades, and the computer, geared to the achievement of efficiency, is "already part of everyday reality and will become increasingly so with the accelerating pace of current technological developments" (Brown 1988, p.86). In the most general sense, technology refers to the application of knowledge for more effective performance of certain tasks and activities; it converts spontaneous and unreflective behaviour into behaviour that is deliberate and rationalized. However, some people question whether the use of technology is wholly beneficial, and in the field of educational technology conflicting attitudes and values surround and sometimes confuse the issue.

In a formal learning situation objectives are defined by the syllabus and attained by the learner through the mastery of prescribed tasks. The primary function of educational technology is to present these tasks to the learner; it is in principle only a medium through which material can be offered to the learner and hence the conditions for learning created. It cannot of itself ensure that effective learning will take place. However, a given technology can enhance the interest or appeal of the task and thus, hopefully, increase the learner's motivation to learn.

In recent years there has been a growing interest in the use of computers in language learning. The inherent advantage of the computer is that it can offer interactive learning and can handle a much wider range of activities and is more powerful than other educational aids. According to Butler (1985) the use of computers in language learning may be divided into (a) the automatic analysis of texts, which can be used as an aid to course design, and (b) the use of the computer to present teaching materials to the learner.

Higgins (1988) proposes that the computer can be given two roles, that of the instructor, or magister, on the one hand and that of the obedient slave, or pedagogue, on the other. He suggests that the computer's main value is as an environment which allows trial-and-error learning and language experiments to be carried out. Unfortunately, the traditional view of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) implies the substitution of the computer for the teacher, and a wholly self-access use of the machine. It suggests that a CALL lesson is determined solely by the interaction between learner and computer and ignores methodological considerations in which the teacher plays a key role (Jones & Fortescue 1987). It is essential to realize that this type of claim is not being made for computer-assisted language learning. As the term itself implies, the emphasis is on using the computer to assist the learning process. The objective of computer-assisted language learning is to enhance the teacher's ability to teach, not to replace him. CALL cannot cover the whole language teaching curriculum, nor is it a self-contained methodology.

An unfortunate and widely held misconception is that CALL is intrinsically behaviourist in nature. It is not surprising, then, that language teachers in general seem reluctant to approach this latest technology. Feedback derived from questionnaires collected by CILT (the Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research, London) suggests that the vast majority of language teachers have no interest in "what they see as automated programmed learning, a method underpinned by the audio-lingual method of language learning and supported by behaviourist learning theories" (Brown 1988, p.87). It has been suggested that the concern expressed by teachers opposed to CALL is based on their prior experience with "revolutionary" instructional media. Many expect that the computer will be just another in a series of highly touted technological tools that have neither revolutionized learning nor lived up to initial promises (Dunkel 1987).

It is important to bear in mind the relatively restricted role of computers in the overall language learning process. Davies (1982) points out that the computer may be an excellent aid to presenting one aspect of the subject but inferior to more traditional methods in presenting other aspects. It will perform at remarkable speed exactly the instructions given it either by the computer program or by the user *via* the keyboard or some other input device such as the light pen, touch-sensitive screen, or mouse. It is a flexible aid that will lend itself to a variety of different purposes, but it has

limitations, because for all its speed and accuracy, it remains a mere machine. To some degree the computer can replicate human activity, but only if that activity can be comprehensively and unambiguously described. It can provide feedback only by using information stored in its memory. It operates in a pre-determined fashion and cannot cope with the unexpected, which rules out any genuinely open-ended activity. It is poor at assessing answers because it cannot store every wrong answer that might be given and make an appropriate response to each. It cannot judge the reason for a particular wrong answer, whether carelessness, for example, or faulty grasp of a grammatical rule. Because the computer's answers are not based on understanding, its contribution is heavily dependent on the program-writer's ability to anticipate all contingencies. In addition, the material that can be usefully handled by the computer represents at best a tiny fraction of the linguistic knowlege which a teacher brings to bear in the language class. The computer is deficient in that it has no breadth of knowledge and no ability to find comparisons in the everyday experience shared by learners and teacher (Higgins 1988).

Yet despite its limitations, the computer represents a promising development in educational technology and has many advantages for both teacher and learner. One of the computer's strongest points is its interactive ability, which means that it can conduct a two-way learning session with the learner. It can respond to the learner and provide immediate and (through complex branching) differentiated feedback. It can take the learner through subsequent attempts at a question and to different sections of the program depending on the nature of the learner's response. Unlike any other classroom aid, the computer can vary the exercise each time it is done and within certain limits adapt its language to what the learner produces. This is the characteristic that allows it to endlessly vary the stimuli in a drill, and it can repeat an activity with none of the errors which easily arise from repetition by humans. The computer is good at presenting statements and illustrating them with examples, and can offer tremendous scope for dynamic explanations using colour, graphics, and animation in a way that far outclasses talk and chalk. When the learner has completed the session, the computer can record results, errors, success rates, time spent, and much more information for the teacher to view at a later date if necessary. As a result of this information, or from the reactions of the learners, the teacher is able to revise and refine the materials at any stage, unlike a text book, which the teacher cannot change. The computer gives the learner the

opportunity to benefit from material carefully designed or selected by the teacher. Using feedback and reports from the learner's performance, the teacher can tailor packages (linguistic data and programs) specifically to the needs of individual learners.

By using a computer, learning sessions can be made more concentrated than normal classes. Unlike the conventional "full-frontal" pedagogical procedures described by Sinclair & Coulthard (1975), which place the learner in a largely passive role, there is no "low attention" period with the computer as the learner awaits his turn in class. It has been estimated that a learner in a class of fifteen may have five interactions with the teacher during a 50-minute period, but when working with the computer the figure is at least ten times greater. In addition, the computer can accommodate different speeds of learning. While limits can be imposed on the time available for answering questions, which is valuable when the computer is used for testing purposes, more importantly it allows learners to work at their own pace and to find their own level. The possibility of working at their own pace is valuable not only for "slow" learners but also for learners who finish early and need extra tasks and material to stretch them.

The computer seems to be a powerful motivating force for productive study. In computer-assisted learning publications, frequent reference is made to the power of the computer to motivate and to absorb the learner's attention. For example, Kelly (1984, p.9), speaking of children interacting with microcomputers, points out that a "degree of motivation which would be regarded as exceptional in any other context becomes commonplace in this". Students seem to enjoy themselves more and are willing to spend more time at the keyboard than on more conventional activities (Windeatt 1986). Experience has shown that working with the computer is rated highly by students, that attention spans are longer, and that the material is usually learnt better and more quickly. Surveys of learners' attitudes to their experience with CALL reveal positive reactions for motivation, continued enrolment, and the quality and pace of learning (Ahmad et al. 1985).

Motivation is an important variable in the learning process. Educational psychologists believe that the effects of motivation are largely mediated by such intervening variables as the focussing of attention, persistence, and increased frustration tolerance, and that the most appropriate way of maintaining motivation is to focus on the cognitive aspects of learning. Many aspects of the learning situation can foster cognitive drive by

attracting and sustaining attention. In this regard, the novelty of the computer may arouse interest, but the nature and quality of the software or programs is crucial. Individual learners have particular needs, abilities, interests, and limitations. Learners need to feel that their studies are meaningful and relevant to their own specific requirements. In terms of CALL this entails setting the learner tasks (or enabling him to set himself tasks) which are both relevant and rewarding, i.e., challenging, stimulating or entertaining. In addition, the material offered should be at a level appropriate to the learner's abilities and should offer clues and HELP options so that he can make a reasonable attempt at the material, and even an EXIT facility so that he can leave the exercise if he wants. Learners find it particularly satisfying to be able to control their learning. Nothing dampens and extinguishes motivation more quickly than frustration and failure. To account for individual differences, the teacher can aim to provide a variety and choice of interactive learning routines. Of particular advantage in this regard is the possibility of using an "authoring package" which provides the teacher with a relatively trouble-free way of creating materials tailored to the needs and interests of his learners, as the same basic algorithm may be used for any number of programs which differ only in their linguistic content. In addition, databases containing various kinds of help (thematic, lexical, grammatical, and so on) could be built up by the teacher in response to learner feedback; the same database could be used in relation to an unlimited number of interactive routines (Little 1987).

In language teaching the computer can be used essentially in three ways. It can be used to present material to the whole class; it can be used by small groups of learners working together at the screen either in the classroom or on a self-access basis; and it can be used as an individual resource either in the classroom or on a self-access basis. How the computer is used will depend on the number of computers available, on the teacher, and on the activity being undertaken, as some types of material will lend themselves to one form of exploitation rather than another.

Computers can either be used as "stand-alone" systems, where each computer is an independent unit with its own peripherals, or they can be linked together to form a Local Area Network (LAN) and share peripherals such as a disk drive and a printer. With the stand-alone system the teacher has to provide one disk for each computer or take the disk from one computer to another to load the program. In a networked system learners at each terminal can all access the same central disk drive by selecting from

a menu. In addition, by using an add-on called a modem it is possible to link a computer *via* the telephone line to commercial databases and external networks or to computers in other institutions.

Descriptions of the objectives of second and foreign language teaching usually stress instruction in the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This classification, which isolates the skills into sub-components of the overall process of communication, is useful for looking at each of the skills separately, but it is an oversimplification since in real-language activity it is often hard to separate one skill from another. Nevertheless, the classification enables us to see in broad terms where the computer's present capabilities lie. An essential characteristic of language is that it is primarily a spoken medium. This is obviously a problem for the computer since its ability to deal with speech is far less developed than its ability to deal with written signals. But it is one of the great advantages of the computer that any activity at the keyboard will tend to involve a variety of skills, and it is understood that these skills rest on a foundation of language knowledge that includes vocabulary, grammar and culture. Before looking at some of the ways in which the computer can be used to develop the four language skills, we will look at some practical ways in which the computer can contribute to the development of vocabulary and grammar.

Teaching vocabulary

Work with vocabulary is generally a component of reading and writing courses, and learners are often expected to pick up new vocabulary from their course books and readers and integrate it into their general language competence. Foreign language learners whose mother tongue uses a different writing system from the target language have the added difficulty that they must first become familiar with individual letters and alphabetical order before they can recognize words, which in turn is essential before any kind of independent work on vocabulary can take place. There are many computer programs available which were not specially devised for foreign language learners but are suitable for them. They include programs such as *Happywriting*, which can help learners with the recognition and formation of upper and lower case letters. Some programs of this kind simply draw large letters slowly on the screen so that the learner can imitate the process on paper, while others allow the learner to practise writing on screen using a light pen or a graphics pad.

For learners familiar with individual letters, the computer can give useful practice in word-recognition and word-building. At a basic level, a simple program like *Wordspin*, which concentrates on the individual letters in a word, helps learners to recognize whole word shapes. The learner selects a category, e.g., animals or vegetables, and is then presented with the letters of a word which is rotating. The learner's first task is to arrange the letters of the word in correct sequence; then the learner must replace randomly blanked out letters; and finally the whole word is blanked out and the learner must type it in. Another effective program flashes a word on the screen and the learner's task is to type in the word. Very often a timing element is built into these programs, ranging from a few seconds down to a fraction of a second, and the learner can increase speed as his recognition skills improve. The advantage of these programs is that the learner can use them on a self-access basis without taking up anyone's time, and without the fear of being seen to be slow. Familiarity with new words comes with use and practice, and a good way to practise vocabulary is to play word games. While this can sometimes be difficult to manage and co-ordinate with a large group of learners in the classroom, it is very feasible using the computer. There is a wide variety of games available to suit all abilities and tastes, such as *Hangman*, *Snap*, *Scrabble*, *Mindword*, and *Wordsquare*. These games can be used by individuals or by small groups working together either in the classroom or on a self-access basis. Different games can use the same sets of words, so that the learner can practice a particular lexical set with whatever game or activity suits him best.

It is a common practice of language learners to keep vocabulary notebooks in which they write down new words together with their meanings and an illustrative sentence or two. With a computer it is possible to use a simple database to build up, store and access vocabulary. A program of this kind specifically designed for language learners is *Wordstore*, which allows the learner to write up to 1,000 entries on a single disk, each entry consisting of a word or phrase, a definition and an illustrative sentence. Entries can be corrected, modified or embellished, and deleted when they are no longer needed; the learner can print out his own "dictionary"; and he can test himself by having the computer display a randomly chosen definition from which the keyword has been omitted. This on-screen dictionary has a number of advantages over a conventional notebook. It stores information in alphabetical order; items can be added and deleted with no crossing-out and no mess, so that presentation is always clear and attractive; and the test

option provides an interactive dimension entirely lacking in a vocabulary notebook. Such a program could be made available as a reference disk containing all the new vocabulary in the class course book or specialist word lists (Jones & Fortescue 1987). The computer can also be used as an interactive dictionary: when he encounters an unfamiliar word the learner types it into the computer; and instead of giving direct assistance the computer offers the learner several possible meanings and invites him to use context and in some cases morphological clues to decide on the meaning of the word. Each time the learner uses the computerized dictionary he is asked to develop his skills in handling new information (Wyatt 1984).

Teaching grammar

Mastery of a language involves the ability to produce correct sentences. Language use involves a knowledge of the rules of grammar which, while seeming to place a restriction on all the things we want to do, actually make communication possible in the first place (Higgins 1988). While the debate about the role of grammar in language teaching still continues, almost all activities in the language classroom can be said to include grammar. Free discussion, simulations, reading and writing tasks all bring the learner's grammatical abilities into play constantly. Learners vary widely in the speed with which they understand and grasp grammatical generalizations and rules. For the learner who requires longer, more carefully structured explanations, the computer has a number of advantages as a medium of demonstration. Visual presentation in the form of pictures, graphics or tables can help to make clear the relationship between form and meaning. Simple animation can be used to show grammatical processes, such as the "do" insertion in English negation and question forms, or word order in subordinate clauses in German. Indeed, German subordinate clauses are beloved of program authors, since they provide the opportunity to show off the facility for moving words around the screen. It can be frustrating for teachers to spend much of their time drilling grammar points, to the detriment of other, more communicative activities. Computerized versions of traditional question-and-answer and multiple-choice exercises provide feedback for learners that is more sophisticated than a written answer sheet. The computer will, for example, allow a second or subsequent attempt when the learner gives a wrong answer, and may provide

CLUES and HELP levels if the learner has difficulty with a question. In the language class individuals or groups of learners can be working productively at the keyboard, leaving the teacher free to deal with particular problems that arise in particular groups.

Inflectional morphology is an area of grammar which is most suited to the computer, since alternative answers are not usually possible. In such exercises the learner is required to provide noun endings, adjective endings, or different parts of the verb, to change the grammatical case or the word order, and so on. These exercises may be presented in different ways but very often they are presented as gap-filling exercises. The most traditional exercises in CALL are simple matching exercises, which are much the same as on paper. The learner is presented with two columns of sentence halves, e.g., deductions and reasons, which he has to match to make acceptable sentences. On the computer these types of exercises can have HELP and CHEAT facilities built into the program and can be given a game format where the learner tries to do the exercise without losing a life. The computer's capacity for randomization means that items can be presented in a different order when learners repeat the exercise. Using an authoring program such as *Matchmaster*, the teacher can easily create his own matching exercises to suit the interests and abilities of his students. Another traditonal CALL program is the multiple-choice format, which usually consists of a number of questions to which learners choose their answers by moving an arrow from item to item. If they choose an incorrect answer, an error message will appear on the screen. Error messages are necessarily short and cannot compete with the explanation the teacher could give in person, but they serve their purpose. Using an authoring package like *Choicemaster*, the teacher can create multiple-choice programs either in the tutorial mode, that is, giving immediate feedback, or in the test mode, with feedback delayed until the end of the test.

An example of an activity which would not be possible without a computer and is more suitable for more advanced learners is the exploratory program. Such a program gives the computer a rule or rules for handling some feature of grammar, e.g., a word inflexion, a sentence transformation, or even the selection of an appropriate stylistic form. Learners input questions or phrases into the computer in order to see what it does, and attempt to deduce the rules and assess their adequacy. Higgins (1988, p.44) suggests that when a computer is used in this way, the language learner is not just learning from the computer but from the total learning en-

vironment, which includes reference books, teacher, the pooled knowledge of the group, and the dormant knowledge of the individual.

Teaching reading

By its very nature reading is a highly individual process. Even in a class where the proficiency levels of the learners are quite similar, reading speeds and comprehension abilities can vary widely. With reading activities, it is usually necessary for the teacher to choose an average speed of presentation, which may still be frustratingly rapid for slow learners, or too slow for abler learners, not challenging and developing their skills as it should. A principle in the development of reading skills is to provide students with reading materials at a level slightly above their current reading proficiency so as to challenge them without causing frustration, and to permit each student to complete the reading and any activities based on it at an individual pace. The computer enables the teacher to individualize the reading class to a certain degree (Wyatt 1989).

It has been suggested that teaching reading may largely be a matter of convincing learners that they will enjoy it if they do more of it (Higgins 1988). Learners can be motivated to read if reading is a condition of enjoying some other experience, such as solving a problem or winning a game. Almost all CALL programs, whether oriented towards reading or not, involve the learner in reading text for a real purpose, that is, the successful completion of an activity. An example of this is the reading maze, which has been used in language learning for some time. With a reading maze the learner is presented with a chunk of text which outlines a situation and several possible courses of action. The learner makes a choice and is presented with an updated situation and a further choice of options. The computerized maze commits the learner to the choice he has made and can record the number of choices made before a successful outcome is reached. The key ingredient in this type of program is the successful comprehension of the text that describes each new situation. The linguistic complexity of the description can be matched to the learner's reading level.

In teaching reading skills, a common approach is to give learners a piece of text to read with follow-up exercises to test their comprehension. By using a computer, text can be modified or adjusted and reading passages made available in a number of versions. For example, an authentic text

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which uses a large number of relative pronouns can be introduced first for comprehension in a simpler form without relative pronouns. When it is clear that the learner has grasped the modified version, the more difficult text can be displayed for further work, or the two texts can be displayed side by side on the screen. The computer programs most commonly used to test reading comprehension and provide feedback to the learner are traditional multiple-choice and fill-in exercises. They can be used to focus attention on different aspects of reading, like guessing the meaning of words from context, skimming and scanning, paragraph focus, and so on.

One skill which appears to be an important component of fluent reading is prediction, that is, the continuous formation of hypotheses about what is coming next based on the material already encountered. In one type of program designed to develop this skill, learners read a number of sentences and are then given a choice of several possible examples of a "next sentence". HELP levels can be built into the program to assist the learner, and if the answer is incorrect the computer can draw attention to the features in the preceding sentences that militate against the choice.

An important area of reading skills development is training learners to improve their reading speed and efficiency. Research has shown that poor readers tend to approach reading as a word-by-word decoding task, while efficient readers read in chunks, taking in groups of words with a single eye fixation and making fewer regressions to earlier parts of the text. An effective way to help learners develop this skill is to use the computer with a timing program. The computer can display text, which should be at the learner's current ability level, for a limited period of time, which is fixed either in advance by the programmer or at the keyboard by the learner. An example of a program of this type is *Speedread*, an authoring package which allows the learner to choose a piece of text and any of nine different speeds. According to his level of comprehension, the learner can regulate the activity to suit his ability and can graduate to higher speeds as he learns to read more efficiently.

A well-established activity in the language classroom is the cloze test, in which every *n*th word is deleted from a piece of continuous text and the learner is asked to supply an appropriate word for each gap. The creation of cloze tests is simplified by using a computerized authoring package such as *Gapkit* or *Clozemaster*. *Gapkit* allows the gaps to be whole words, parts of words, or phrases, and is useful for creating exercises which have a specific pedagogic point, as the gaps can be limited to specific types of words, such

as prepositions and articles, or parts of words, such as prefixes, suffixes and verb endings. With *Clozemaster*, which has HELP facilities, learners can select a text and then decide how difficult they want the task to be as they can instruct the computer to delete anything from every fifth to every fifteenth word. Since the gaps are created on the spot by the computer, learners can work on the same text on subsequent occasions, each time choosing a different gap frequency. The computer's ability to mutilate text is taken to its extreme with total deletion programs such as *Textbag* or *Storyboard*, where every word in a short text is deleted, leaving only the title, the punctuation, and dashes or asterisks representing the letters of each word. The learner's task is to recreate the text by guessing whole words. When a correct word is guessed, it appears wherever it occurs in the text. The program has a HELP facility which can supply missing words and allow the learner to see the full text flashed up on the screen for a few seconds. These types of programs can be an immensely challenging activity for language learners as they require them to draw on a wide range of language knowledge.

Teaching writing

Writing is a laborious task for many people, in particular for the foreign language learner whose native writing system is different from that of the target language. The learner attempting a writing task must try to convey a message to his reader, which involves observing the rules of grammar, remembering the relevant vocabulary items, and incorporating the whole within a framework that involves correct paragraphing (Jones & Fortescue 1987). Appropriately used, the computer can relieve both teachers and learners of much of the drudgery usually associated with writing classes. Many of the programs used to teach grammar, vocabulary and reading help to develop the sub-skills needed for writing. At the same time, since many writing activities involve free expression, there are definite limits to the role that the computer can play.

The computer makes its greatest contribution to the development of writing skills as a word-processor. A word-processing package permits the user to store, edit, manipulate, retrieve, and print out text. Used in the creation, correction and editing of written assignments, the computer offers considerable advantages over the traditional medium of pen and paper. For one thing, it encourages the learner to experiment with words

and text and frees him from the mess of deletions and insertions that typify similar work on paper. The computer shows an instant and well-formed picture of the current state of the text. Using print commands, the learner can control the lay-out of his text, underlining or italicizing selected words and emphasizing parts of the text. While word-processors are very versatile programs, they are not necessarily difficult to use. For most purposes, it will be sufficient for learners to master only the basics: how to insert, delete and move text, together with the "search and replace" facility. Most word-processing programs have a spelling checker, which consists of a list of upwards of 30,000 words. Many foreign language learners feel unsure about spelling, and while a spelling checker does not do away with the need for a dictionary, it can help speed up the correction process. When a text is finished, the writer can run it through the spelling checker, which will draw attention to any words not contained in the list. Several spelling checkers also allow the user to add to the list, which is particularly useful for technical and specialist vocabulary.

A component of many writing curricula is guided writing, which is adaptable to computerization to the extent that it involves little or no free expression. In such activities learners are usually given a piece of writing which they must alter in some way. It might be a passage or dialogue which is incomplete, or a complete passage which is badly organized and needs changing. A word-processor is ideal for this sort of work and provides an ideal way of manipulating existing sentences and paragraphs in an effortless manner on the monitor. However, as we have already noted, when writing involves free expression, there are limits to the role the computer can play. Although it can always be used to focus attention on errors, it can do little to help with actual error correction, which is where the teacher must take over. It is rare for learners to be trained in the skill of redrafting or even to realize that it is relevant to their concerns. Most learners regard the writing activity as finished when they hand their work to the teacher, so an important stage in the writing process, feedback and self-correction, can be missing. However, when the computer is being used to perform a writing task, the learner can run his text through the spelling checker, which will draw attention to most spelling errors. He can then print out his text to hand in to the teacher and save it on disk. When he receives his corrected print-out, the learner accesses his text on the computer, and using the teacher's comments, corrects or edits his work as necessary before making a new print-out.

One way of motivating students to write is to provide them with a communicative reason for writing. Most learners are familiar with Teletext services, which allow access to vast amounts of information from commercial databases. Simple versions of these information systems can be created by learners, using information that is of interest to them. One such system, *Belltext*, is written by students of the Bell Language School and contains pages of college information, world news, jokes, entertainment, and forthcoming activities (Eastment 1985). Information pages could be created as class writing tasks and could be accessed on a computer or printed as a newsletter for distribution among learners. Used in this way, the computer can act as a stimulus and can help transform attitudes towards writing.

Teaching speaking

Of the four language skills, speaking is the one for which the computer in its present state of development can do least as far as standard class activities are concerned. However, although computers do not talk and listen, they are very good at stimulating people to talk and listen (Higgins & Johns 1984). Virtually any software can provide a context for conversation provided it is interesting to the learner and comprehensible in terms of linguistic and cultural content. CALL software designed for use in other skill areas can be used for speaking practice by assigning learners to work in pairs or in larger groups.

It has been suggested that the use of computers in language learning is in conflict with current trends which emphasize communication, especially oral interaction. However, Kenning & Kenning (1983, p.5) do not see any incompatibility between the communicative approach and the use of computers. They suggest that as well as being helpful in developing the basis necessary for achieving a reasonable level of communicative competence, computers have the advantage that they permit the splitting of the class and thus enable the teacher to create the kind of environment which simulation and other communicative activities require. In addition, computer simulations and adventures provide learners with a focus for oral activity and a continually changing scenario to talk about.

Computer simulations are essentially programs which enable the user to manipulate a "real life" or imaginary situation or set of data in order to test the outcomes of a decision. They provide a basis for activities which would be impossible using any other medium. The computer provides

instant feedback on the consequences of the decision in the form of an updated situation and the learners can follow the process through to an uncertain outcome. The feedback the computer gives is authoritative and there is no going back over unwise decisions. In using computer simulations careful preparation and management are necessary if their potential is to be fully exploited. During the preparation phase the teacher introduces the program, deals with any new vocabulary items, and can focus on specific language functions such as making suggestions, expressing probability or possibility, and so forth. The language exponents singled out for special attention will depend on the program being used and on the language learners' level of ability. The teacher's most important role occurs in the debriefing session, where learners get feedback on the quality of the language used during the activity. Learners should be encouraged to analyse their linguistic performance and if necessary to decide on remedial work. The potential subject matter of computer simulations is unlimited and there is a wide variety available to suit all tastes. The learner of English could run the British economy with *GB Ltd*, manage stocks and shares with *Stokmark*, or run a small business with *Fast Food*.

An adventure program differs from a simulation in that it has a single story with a definite plot which assigns the learner a task or sequence of tasks, often fraught with danger. Like simulations, adventure programs involve the teacher in careful preparation and classroom management if they are to be fully exploited. They can generate a lot of communicative oral language as learners work in groups or as a whole class towards the solution, and they can form the basis for various oral and written activities. One adventure program which has been specially designed for learners of English is *London Adventure*, which casts the learner in the role of tourist with a number of tasks to fulfil, such as changing money, buying postcards, and so on. The learner uses a menu of choices to decide where to go, and when language is called for he selects what he considers to be the most appropriate from a number of utterances.

Very few adventure programs have been written specifically for language learners, and those aimed at the leisure market are not always suitable for pedagogical purposes. However, the value of adventure programs lies essentially in the stimulus they provide for discussion and planning, and authoring packages like *The Last Adventure* and *The Quill* allow learners to create adventure scenarios for other learners to solve (Jones & Fortescue 1987).

Teaching listening

The whole area of listening and CALL is one which is undergoing rapid development. Learning to recognize and distinguish the sounds of a language is a prerequisite both for effective listening comprehension and for good pronunciation. Unfortunately the quality of speech generated by speech synthesizers is not yet particularly helpful to language learners as it is devoid of stress and intonation and in this respect cannot compare with a recorded human voice. However, the computer's power to interact with learners and provide feedback can be exploited in association with an audio or video recorder.

It is possible to use a manually controlled audio recorder in conjunction with a computer; but it is much easier to use a Tandberg AECAL cassette recorder, which was specifically designed to be operated *via* a computer, with either the learner or the program itself in control. The cassette recorder is used to present items of language to the learner and the computer is used to test the learner's responses. The computer gives instant feedback on the learner's responses, and as well as keeping a score, can be programmed to keep a record of the kinds of errors made by the learner. In addition to feedback, the computer can offer to let the learner hear a relevant item again. Because the computer controls the tape, the recorder will automatically and almost instantly rewind to the correct place and replay the desired item.

The computer can also be linked to a video source. With video, as Rushby (1979, p.39) points out, "although the student can view a particular sequence an unlimited number of times, the medium is still passive because it cannot respond differently to each student or vary its approach to take account of a student's individual problems". However, by interfacing a computer with a video source it is possible to give the user control of the video *via* the computer keyboard and to involve him actively in the running of the system. Interactive video can capitalize on a wealth of sound and vision and give an interactive dimension to already existing video material. The computer's power and capacity to store, manipulate and display information gives a versatility to interactive video unequalled by any other audio-visual medium (Parsloe 1983).

The video component of interactive video systems may be either videodisc or videocassette. Videodisc gives better picture and sound quality than videotape, offers instant random access, and can be played

frame by frame or as a moving picture. The disadvantages of the videodisc-based system are, as Bennett (1987, p.12) points out, mainly financial, and there is relatively little material available so far on videodisc. While videotape has the disadvantage of poor still-frame display and the linear character of tape means delays in access to different parts of the program, it has financial advantages in that videocassette recorders are commonplace and it is relatively inexpensive to produce video material provided one has the necessary recording and editing equipment.

The Autotutor interactive videocassette system was designed and developed in the Centre for Language and Communication Studies, Trinity College, Dublin, as a means of exploiting available video materials (Little & Davis 1986). The Autotutor is a low-cost system on which learning materials can be produced without recourse to video editing and without computer programming. The Autotutor's first role is that of presenting material to the learner by means of the video. It may then ask the learner to evaluate that presentation, offer a series of exercises, and provide immediate feedback. One video program can be used with several different computer programs to create a number of different interactive patterns, and grammatical, lexical and sociocultural information can be built into the computer program to aid comprehension and promote active viewing. The learner can move through the program at his own pace, and branching, which allows the user a choice of what to do, devolves responsibility on to the user for his interaction with the program. Rather than restricting the learner to a predetermined lesson, interactive video can free him to create, within limitations, his own learning experience. Little (1986, p.10) suggests that "if learners can be brought to the point of creating their own learning materials, not only will interactive video have been fully integrated in the language learning process, but learners themselves will have achieved almost total autonomy".

The potential of the computer to make an impact on the skills of speaking and listening is vast (Pennington 1989). The immediate advantage of using the computer as an aid to developing listening skills is in terms of feedback and individualization. The disadvantage of listening skills activities conducted on a whole-class basis is that it is difficult to give feedback that is continuous and individualized. By providing learning activities other than those managed personally by the teacher, the computer frees the teacher to deal with individuals or small groups of learners according to their assessed needs and provides the learner with an individualized

tutorial session at the keyboard.

Conclusion

Educational computing has added a new dimension to language learning: for the first time we have access to teaching materials that can be adapted to the needs, interests and individual motives of language learners. In addition, the computer offers students the means of assuming mastery over their own learning experience. The three main factors in CALL are the learner, linguistics, and computer technology; the computer itself is just a sophisticated piece of technological hardware that can be used well or badly. Future developments in CALL must be rooted in research, and Phillips (1986) points out that in considering the educational role of computer technology, consideration must be given to what sort of learning environment we want to create with the aid of the computer. Educational computing is still in its infancy, and the question arises whether this new language learning aid will merely reinforce current educational practices and methodologies or whether it will be successfully exploited to offer fruitful opportunities for curriculum renewal, and perhaps a reappraisal of some of the basic tenets of current educational practices.

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Gapkit (Acorn BBC; Commodore 4032). Authoring program for creating gap-filling exercises. Gaps can be whole words, groups of words, parts of words. Includes automatic review of learners' errors. Printer facility. Camsoft, 10 Wheatfield Close, Maidenhead, Berks, SL6 3PS, England.

Hangman (Spectrum). Computer word game program available at two levels, Waystage and Threshold. Castle Software, P.O. Box 116, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN22 9JZ, England.

Happy Writing (Acorn BBC; Amstrad 464; Electron). Letter recognition and formation program which draws letters, words and numbers. Adjustable speed. Bourne Educational Software Ltd, Bourne House, The Hundred, Romsey, Hants, SO5 8BY, England.

London Adventure (Acorn BBC; Apple). Multiple-choice adventure programme for EFL students, set in London. Cambridge University Press.

Matchmaster (Acorn BBC). Authoring program for creating matching exercises. Features 40- and 80-column matching and 'Snap', an animated matching exercise with various speeds. Wida Software.

Scrabble (Acorn BBC; Amstrad; Commodore 64). Computer version of the board game, for up to 4 players, including the computer. Leisure Genius, 2-4 Vernon Yard, 119 Portobello Road, London W11 2DX.

Speedread (Acorn BBC). Authoring program to create rapid-reading exer-

cises, with 9 speeds of presentation. Has an untimed reading option. Reading text is followed by multiple-choice questions to test comprehension. Wida Software.

Stokmark (Acorn BBC). Computer simulation program which is part of a Business Games package. Acornsoft Ltd, Cambridge Technopark, 645 Newmarket Road, Cambridge CB5 8PD, England.

Storyboard (Acorn BBC; Apple). Authoring program for creating text-reconstruction exercises where the whole text is deleted and replaced on screen by dashes and punctuation. Printer facility. Wida Software.

The Last Adventure (Acorn BBC). Authoring package for the creation of adventure games. Learning and Training Systems Ltd, Haydon House, Alcester Road, Studley, Warwickshire, B80 7AP, England.

The Quill (Acorn BBC; Amstrad 464; Spectrum). Authoring package for the creation of adventure games. Mirrorsoft, Poulton, Bristol, BS18 5BR, England.

Vocab (Acorn BBC). Authoring program for creating files of words together with clues/context sentences which are used as the basis for creating vocabulary activities: 'Mindword', 'Word Order', 'Skullman', 'Which Word', 'Alphagame', 'Anagrams'. Wida Software.

Wordstore (Acorn BBC). Database program which enables learners to create a dictionary with up to 1,000 entries. Wida Software.

All the software listed above may be ordered through International Books, 18 South Frederick Street, Dublin 2.

For a fuller list of CALL software, see the Software Directory in Jones & Fortescue 1987.

II : Fairground session

Answers to wh-questions about *Authentik*

Seán Devitt
Authentik Language Learning Resources Ltd
O'Reilly Institute
Trinity College
Dublin

It is fashionable in language teaching to ask "Who? What? Where? When? How?" when dealing with a text, and this is perhaps as good a way as any to present *Authentik*.

What?

Authentik is a two-media product, reproducing in unchanged form recently published or broadcast materials in foreign languages from the countries where those languages are spoken. It is published five times a year at two-monthly intervals as a 24-page tabloid and a C60 cassette in four different language editions, French, German, Spanish and English. There is a learner's supplement in the centre of the newspaper with twelve pages of activities, designed to help users come to grips with the texts and to develop their language competence, and a further four pages containing a full transcript of the cassette.

Where and when?

Authentik began in October 1978 as an eight-page broadsheet of extracts from the French-language press, published under the aegis of the Language Centre of Ireland, Dublin. After three years it was attached to the Department of Teacher Education, Trinity College, and the paper was published as part of a research project in that department. 1983 was a turning point. In that year the format was changed from 8-page broadsheet to 16-page tabloid, a cassette of radio broadcasts was added, and the German edition was born. In 1984 readers' notes were added and a Spanish edition was launched. An Irish and an Italian edition followed early in 1985, but

unfortunately neither lasted more than eighteen months for lack of subscriptions. The English edition was launched in January 1989. Since March 1987 *Authentik* has been published by a Campus Company of Trinity College.

Why?

The foreign language classroom gives a learner very little contact with the language in use - no more than 100 hours per year, if the teacher uses only the foreign language in the classroom. *Authentik* was conceived to make up for this serious lack in the language learner's diet. It is meant to be something learners pick up to read or listen to in their free time for interest and pleasure. It provides a selection of interesting material in a familiar and attractive format. The language learner is thus a language user from the moment he begins to work with *Authentik*. *Authentik* is also a "convenience food" since it provides fresh ingredients from a wide variety of sources and cuts out the need for sifting through large quantities of raw material (even if they are available) to find a suitable diet.

How?

How does *Authentik* work? The texts are selected primarily for their interest. Users are already familiar with much of what appears. They find their favourite topics as well as lots of items of general interest. That means that they can use their general world knowledge much as they do when reading or listening in their native language. Because they are already familiar with newspapers and radio, they know what to expect.

However, we know that learners often become discouraged when they come up against difficulties caused, they believe, by their not knowing the language. They may feel that *Authentik* is not for them because they do not have a good enough grasp of the language. This need not be the case. The difficulties in texts in a foreign language can come from a variety of sources. *Authentik*'s editorial teams identify these sources of likely difficulty in each issue and provide help at various levels in the learner's supplement. Learners are shown how to use their own resources to overcome the difficulties. For classroom contexts activities often involve working in groups so that learners can share resources and expertise. At all times the emphasis is on what they can themselves contribute.

Who?

Who uses *Authentik*? Learners at all levels, from beginners to advanced, from 12 years of age to 80. Most schools in Ireland and well over half in Britain now take it. Teachers use *Authentik* in class in a variety of ways. Some simply take the texts and use them as material for exam preparation for their students. Others select from the activities what they feel their learners need. An increasing number now use *Authentik* as the sole source for their language teaching. Some adventurous teachers leave the initiative to the learners, allowing them to develop their autonomy.

Who produces *Authentik*? For each edition there is a full-time editor who is supported by a team of co-operating teachers. The editors are in a position to implement immediately the latest and best ideas for language learning. They are supported by research into language acquisition carried out in Trinity College. They receive feedback from the co-operating teachers and from teachers and students on in-service days run by *Authentik*. There is a constant flow of information in both directions between researchers and users which makes *Authentik* unique.

Where to?

Authentik will continue to develop new approaches to language learning and to make learning foreign languages both more efficient and more enjoyable.

Dúshlán

Máire Treasa Ní Dhonnchadha
agus Eamonn Ó Dónaill
An Teanglann
Coláiste Phádraig
Má Nuad
Co. Chill Dara

Cúrsa cumarsáideach Gaeilge don Teanglann é *Dúshlán* atá dírithe ar mhic léinn na céadbhliana san ollscoil. D'fhéadfaí é a úsáid, afách, sa seomra ranga agus bheadh sé oiriúnach chomh maith do dhaoine fásta a bheadh ag iarraidh feabhas a chur ar a gcuid Gaeilge labhartha. Acmhainní fírinneacha ar fad a úsáideadh sa chúrsa mar gur measadh go mbeadh beogacht ag baint lena leithéid d'ábhar a spreagfadh an foghlaimeoir go mór.

Cinneadh go gcuirfí idir chainteoirí dúchais agus Ghaeilgeoirí ón nGa'lacht a mbeadh caighdeán sásúil Gaeilge acu faoi agallamh. (Chonacthas dúinn gur mhaith an rud a leithéidí a chur faoi agallamh mar go dtabharfaidís, mar fhoghlaimeoirí, spreagadh agus misneach don té a bheadh ar bheagán Gaeilge.) Bailíodh na taifeadtaí thar tréimhse bliana (chuir Raidió na Gaeltachta cuid acu ar fáil) agus caitheadh bliain eile ansin ag cur an chúrsa le chéile. Pléitear réimse leathan ábhar sna hagallaimh, ina measc cúrsaí reatha, ceol, litríocht, oideachas agus ar uile. Rinneadh iarracht ábhar a roghnú a rachadh i bhfeidhm ar na mic léinn agus a bhainfeadh go dlúth lena saol.

Thangthas ar an tuairim gurbh fhiú an cúrsa seo a chur le chéile tar éis don Teanglann anailís a dhéanamh ar cheistneoir a scaipeadh ar na fochéimithe ar fad a bhí ag déanamh Gaeilge i Maigh Nuad ag tús na bliana acadúla 1987-1988. Ba léir ón gceistneoir go raibh na mic léinn míshásta leis na cúrsaí a bhí á n-úsáid go dtí sin, mar sin, cinneadh ar chúrsa nua a chur i dtoll a chéile ina gcuirfí sin áireamh na moltaí a rinne na mic léinn.

Socraíodh go gcuirfí cúrsa ar fáil i ngach ceann de na príomhchanúintí, sé sin Gaeilge Uladh, Gaeilge na Mumhan agus Gaeilge Chonnacht. Cé go mbeadh ábhar difriúil i ngach cúrsa, d'úsáidfí an cur chuige agus an struchtúr céanna sna trí cinn.

Seacht n-aonad déag atá i ngach cúrsa agus agallamh amháin i ngach aonad. Tá idir fiche nóiméad agus cúig nóiméad is fiche sna haonaid ar fad agus tá na haonaoid roinnte mar seo a leanas:

An Réamhrá

Sa réamhrá cuirtear an té atá faoi agallamh i láthair agus mínítear cén t-ábhar atá á phlé aige/aici.

Roinn A/B/C

Cuirtear tús leis an agallamh féin i Roinn A; i ndiaidh na cainte, a mhaireann 2 nó 3 nóiméad, bíonn 3 nó 4 chleachtadh le déanamh ag an mac léinn, bunaithe ar an bpíosa atá díreach cloiste aige/aici.

Tá an leagan amach céanna ar Roinn B agus C.

Na Cleachtaí

Tá réimse leathan cleachtaí le fáil sa chúrsa seo; scileanna éisteachta, tuisceana agus táirgthe is mó atáimid ag iarraidh a fhorbairt sna mic léinn leis na cleachtaí.

Tá cineálacha éagsúla cleachtaí sa chúrsa a éilíonn go mbeadh na mic léinn ag éisteacht go grinn leis an agallamh ar an téip. Sula gcloiseann siad píosa agallaimh go minic, iarrtar orthu tasc de shaghas éigin a chomhlíonadh (mar shampla, tic a chur i mboscaí) fad is atá siad ag éisteacht leis an agallamh sin. Cinntíonn a leithéid go mbíonn a n-aird go hiomlán ar an gcaint atá ar an téip. I measc na gcleachtaí a fhéachann le scil éisteachta na mac léinn a fheabhsú, tá *Fíor agus Bréagach, Ceisteanna Ilrogha* agus *Líon na Bearnaí*.

Cuirtear béim sa chúrsa chomh maith ar thuiscint agus ar chumas táirgthe an fhoghlaimeora. I ndiaidh do éisteacht le píosa agallaimh, is iondúil go n-iarrtar ar an mac léinn roinnt ceisteanna a fhreagairt ar na rudaí is lárnaí a pléadh sa phíosa atá díreach cloiste aige. Murab ionann agus na cúrsaí a bhí á n-úsáid sa Teanglann i Maigh Nuad go dtí seo, ní thugtar freagra dó ar na ceisteanna. Bhí dhá chúis ann gur bheartaíomar ar na freagraí a fhágáil ar lár. 1) Bhraitheamar go gcuireann sé lagmhisneach ar an mac léinn nuair nach ionann an freagra a thugann sé ar an gceist agus an freagra atá ar an téip; 2) mheasamar go spreagtar an mac léinn le héisteacht níos géire leis an agallamh an dara babhta mura n-éiríonn leis ceist a fhreagairt i gceart an chéad uair. Tá na ceisteanna tuisceana atá sa

chúrsa grádaithe - tá siad bunúsach to maith sna chéad chúpla aonad ach téann siad i ndeacracht ó sin i leith.

I ngach aonad, tá ceisteanna atá dírithe ar an mac léinn féin a thugann deis dó a chuid tuairimí a nochtadh nó a dhearcadh a chur in iúl ar an toipic atá á phlé san aonad áirithe sin. Cuireadh ceisteanna den chinéal seo sa chúrsa freisin le seans a thabhairt don mhac léinn níos mó cainte a dhéanamh i rith an ranga, rud a d'éiligh cuid mhór de na daoine a líon isteach an ceistneoir. Tá cleachtadh rólaithrise ag deireadh cuid de na cúrsaí chomh maith a thugann deis cainte don mhac léinn.

Tá béim an-láidir ar chúrsaí canúnachais sa chúrsa seo. Tugtar seans do na mic léinn eolas a fháil ar na canúintí éagsúla agus dírítear a n-aird ar na difríochtaí bunúsacha atá eatarthu. Chinneamar ar chleachtaí a sheachaint a mbeadh athrá focal agus fuaimeanna canúnacha iontu agus tasc a thabhairt do mhic léinn agus iad ag cur eolas níos fearr ar a gcanúint.

Bainfear triail as an gcúrsa seo sa Teanglann i Maigh Nuad ó Mhí na Nollag 1989 ar aghaidh. Idir sin agus deireadh na bliana acadúla molfar don teagascóir a bheas i mbun na ranganna tuairisc ghearr sheachtainiúil a scríobh le barúil a thabhairt caidé chomh héifeachtach agus atá an cúrsa. Ós rud é go bhfuiltear ag féachaint le cuid riachtanas na mac léinn a shásamh, beidh a ndearcadh siúd i leith an chúrsa an-tábhachtach ar fad. Roimh shaoire na Cásca, tá sé beartaithe ceistneoir a chur le chéile a thabharfaidh deis dóibh a dtuairimí ar an gcúrsa a nochtadh agus moltaí a dhéanamh faoin dóigh a dtiocfaí feabhas a chur air. Déanfar mionathruithe ar an gcúrsa i samhradh na bliana 1990, ag cur cuid moltaí na mac léinn san áireamh.

Cogar - language, experience and culture

RTÉ's Irish-language radio series for beginners

Liz McSkeane
Education Officer
Radió Telefís Éireann

Communicative methods of language teaching have long emphasized the importance of relating language learning to the life experience and perceived needs of the learner; and, indeed, often to the culture in which the language is rooted. In RTÉ's new Irish-language radio series, *Cogar*, a conscious effort has been made by RTÉ and by the course designers, Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann, to locate the language within an identifiable cultural context and to link the linguistic learning targets with everyday communicative situations.

From October to December 1988 and from March to May 1989, these twenty half-hour programmes were transmitted on Sunday mornings and again on Tuesday evenings, accompanied by two sets of study notes which were designed by ITÉ and distributed free with the *RTÉ Guide*. A study pack, consisting of four audio cassettes and two sets of study notes, based on the series and produced by Gael Linn, is now available, and the whole series is currently being repeated on RTÉ Radio 1 and on FM3.

Although *Cogar* is aimed at adult beginners, it is assumed that such "beginners" are native to Ireland, where exposure to the language and experience of the educational system make it probable that most learners are, at some level, acquainted with Irish. The motivation of these learners cannot be assumed to coincide with the practical considerations, such as improved career prospects, which often encourage learners of other languages. For many learners, the benefits of learning or of improving their command of Irish seems to be bound up with an enhanced consciousness of Irish culture and traditions and a wish to identify with them.

While the aims of *Cogar* include that of providing a learning resource to aid learners' comprehension and use of basic Irish, the desire to base the

language within a culture and environment, to arouse and maintain the listeners' interest and, of course, to transmit an entertaining radio programme, were equally fundamental.

The course design, by ITÉ, emerged as a result of on-going collaboration between ITÉ and RTÉ. Nineteen communicative themes were identified, and language pertaining to these topics agreed and extracted from interviews with native Irish speakers from the Connemara Gaeltacht. Study notes were devised by ITÉ and production of the radio programmes followed. In other words, a functional-notional syllabus was drawn up and linked to language in current use, which in turn provided the core material for the programme.

Each programme included both material gathered from native speakers and studio-based work: the Gaeltacht interviews provided the language basis on which each programme was built, supported by studio presentation, role-play of simulated situations, and a musical item in which celebrities chose a favourite song in the Irish language, discussed it, and explained their preference. The radio programmes and study notes gave a certain amount of grammatical analysis.

In order to establish the extent to which the aims of the series had been achieved, an evaluation of programmes 11-20 was undertaken by RTÉ. With the help of 93 volunteers, audience reactions to various aspects of the course were examined, while learners gave self-assessments of their progress in language skills. Participants' reactions to questions probing their impressions of the programme format, pace and level were generally positive, the majority finding the series lively and interesting, with the exception of a 10% minority of complete beginners who found the level too high and the pace too fast. As the target audience of the programmes was originally "false" rather than complete beginners, this is not surprising.

Some difficulty emerged with learners' reactions to the style of functional-notional methods of language teaching, where there was less emphasis on translation and word-by-word comprehension and more on gathering the overall gist of quite advanced passages. Despite the fact that many of them had objected to the emphasis placed on grammar, on rote learning and on writing in their school experience of Irish, some learners indirectly suggested returning to the grammar-translation methods with which they were familiar. This indicates that many participants did not understand the purpose of some of the exercises, particularly those which did not demand total comprehension, and suggests that an introductory module clarifying

the uses of various elements of language courses, might be helpful for adult learners of Irish and, indeed, of other languages.

Particularly noticeable as the evaluation proceeded was the decline in the number of participants in the survey who were not part of a class or study group. This underlines the need for distance education in general to operate within a supportive structure, if the interest of the learner is to be maintained, and suggests that erratic participation may be a feature of distance education which should be taken into account in the designing of courses.

Any course which aims to encompass the linguistic, affective and cultural aspects of language learning is an ambitious one, and the programme research shows that *Cogar* achieved a high degree of success in reaching these goals. However, one should bear in mind the difficulty of motivating learners of a second language - an area which is traditionally daunting for natives of these islands. Added to this is the unusual situation of the Irish language, existing almost totally against a back-drop of English.

Considering, also, the essentially interactive nature of language learning, it seems that the great strengths of media resources in second language learning may lie in their facility for making languages accessible to the public, in helping to create a state of readiness in potential learners, and in enhancing the interest and enthusiasm of listeners and viewers, an enthusiasm on which teachers and learners alike can then build.

Note

"*Cogar*: Evaluation of the Irish Language Teaching Series for Radio", by Liz McSkeane, is available on request from Educational Programmes, Annex 5, RTÉ, Donnybrook, Dublin 4.

Camino a Castilla

A multi-media communicative course in Spanish for advanced students

Miranda Stewart
Department of Modern Languages
University of Strathclyde

Since the communicative approach to language teaching (with its emphasis on the spoken language and authenticity of language teaching materials and activities) has started to permeate university language teaching, Spanish departments, with the arrival of satellite television, have followed their Gallic colleagues in exploiting video for language teaching purposes.

However, French departments have not always found this material alone suitable for their needs, and over recent years there have been a number of collaborative projects aimed at producing authentic spoken materials for undergraduate students. In Scotland, 1980 saw the launch of an inter-university research programme which sought to marry new advances in technology (in particular the increasing availability of video facilities) and a communicative approach to language teaching. This led, in 1986, to the publication of *Lyon à la Une*, a multi-media (essentially video) course designed for second-year undergraduate students. In 1988 two further courses were published: *Une vie d'étudiant*, designed to meet the needs of first-year students, and *En fin de compte*, designed to meet the needs of final-year students.

Why video?

A high degree of competence in the foreign language is undoubtedly one of the goals of foreign language teaching at advanced levels. However, for a variety of reasons, it is often assumed that a student will acquire this during a year abroad without the need for any special tuition. While many students achieve a high degree of proficiency by the end of this period, they are often left with the feeling that they could have been better prepared before embarking on it. They need to be able to follow the foreign language

spoken at authentic speeds of delivery, with all the ellipsis, redundancy and incompletion that characterizes the spoken language. Near-native competence means more than the ability to speak with a near-native accent and an accurate command of the grammatical structures of the foreign language. Students need to be able to adapt the language they use so that it is appropriate to a given context (sociolinguistic competence), and to be able to structure what they say so that they can, for example, negotiate, participate in a meeting or give a briefing (discourse competence).

Why produce materials?

Leaving aside the copyright issue, which can prove a powerful deterrent to collaborative exploitation of satellite materials, the main consideration which has led us to produce our own material is the fact that material from the media has already been produced and edited for a different type of audience. Even in the case of material which is broadcast for information (news, documentaries), the notion of entertainment is not absent and recordings are edited with the audience's concentration/interest span in mind. Much broadcast language, far from being spontaneous speech, is either highly pre-planned or, as in large parts of the news, written to be spoken. Interviews are often tightly edited, rarely can the viewer see both the speaker and hearer(s) on screen simultaneously, and even in discussion programmes (e.g. *La Clave*) there is relatively little spontaneous interaction between participants (insofar as speakers are mainly speaking for an external audience and are trying to convince this audience rather than each other). Furthermore, a lot of material taken off air has a relatively short shelf-life in teaching terms and does not age well if it is brought out in subsequent years.

There was clearly a need for advanced materials in languages other than French, and as the result of an initiative by Bill McDowall, then manager of Edinburgh University Language Learning Centre and one of the founder-members of the *Lyon à la Une* team, at Easter 1987, four people armed with a Betacam (broadcast quality) camera, sophisticated sound recording equipment (both analogue and digital) and a list of contacts willing to give us their time and attention, set off for Valladolid for three weeks' intensive filming.

The choice of Valladolid was due to personal contacts and not to the supposed "purity" of the local accent. Indeed, our aim was to record a

variety of voices, male and female, young and old, urban and rural, of varying levels of education and in a variety of situations ranging from the formal to the informal. We also wanted to try to go beyond the customary (and usually easy-to-obtain) interview and try to record other types of interaction, for example, negotiation, discussion, conversation, etc.

Perhaps the most successful examples of the kind of recording we wanted were a series of meetings between journalists (at the local newspaper, *El Norte de Castilla*, and a local radio station) where they had to decide what news items would be included the following day, what the order of priorities was, and who would be responsible for what. Here the speakers were not speaking for an outside audience: they were in fact listening very closely to each other as they negotiated priorities and respective responsibilities. They were also called upon to justify their positions. In these recordings there was a high degree of directive and persuasive language which we had not found elsewhere.

Broad themes

We set off with several broad themes we wished to cover: the media, higher education, commerce, Valladolid itself, and Castilla y León more generally. In all, some 35 hours of video and 20 hours of digital sound were recorded. We had aimed for this material to be of use with first- and second-year undergraduate students in preparation for their year abroad. In fact, we also obtained material suitable for both more and less advanced students.

Unlike similar French courses, the material is to be made available as separate modules. This should enable us to make it available more quickly and also to respond to feedback from the initial pilot modules in developing later modules. It is also the case that material which could be of interest to some institutions (say, material with a more commercial focus) may be of limited use in others.

The following modules are currently under production:

La Facultad en Crisis - higher education;

Sintonizamos Castilla y León - radio and television;

Imágenes de Castilla y León 1 & 2 - tradition and change in the region;

"El Norte de Castilla" - the press;

Comercio y Empresa;

Miscelánea - material not thematically linked which can be used for a variety of purposes, e.g., examining.

Each video lasts approximately 30 minutes and contains a variety of recordings mostly of between one and three minutes' duration (longer extracts may be made available on audio cassette). While these recordings are not intended to be used as a television programme, we have included a voice-over to provide links and contextualization. The written materials which accompany each video contain transcriptions, related written texts, suggested exercises, and teaching and grammar notes. We have also included a guide to the use of video in the language class.

Exploitation

Video has been in use for quite some time now in the teaching of English as a foreign language, and tutors have developed a variety of techniques which can be used with different types of material. As the aims and needs of each group of learners may be substantially different, it seemed more appropriate to provide a summary of some of these techniques and what they seek to achieve so that each tutor can adapt the exploitation of the material to his or her particular group. However, we are also providing one path through each module by means of suggested exercises so that the material can be used "off the peg" if this seems appropriate.

At this level, we hope that video can provide a stimulus for learning and that students can focus on both content and form. Most of the exercises are integrative to some degree (i.e., they combine more than one of the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing). We have included standard gist and discrete point comprehension exercises and, where possible, parallel and jigsaw listening exercises (in which there are recordings of one or more speakers providing complementary information; here the students can listen to different recordings and then exchange information (information gap) in order to carry out some sort of task). We have also tried to provide simulation and task-based exercises where students have to use the foreign language in group discussion in order to arrive at a decision of some kind. A number of writing exercises involve the transfer from the spoken to the written mode. We have included in each module a brief communicative grammar focus (for example, examining the different structures which can be used in Spanish for directive language). It is also our intention to make these materials accessible to the self-directed learner by providing keys to

exercises and to comprehension as a separate supplement.

The first two modules are currently being piloted in a number of institutions of higher education and are due to be available in their final form in August 1990. For further information please contact:

Miranda Stewart
c/o Language Learning Centre
University of Edinburgh
David Hume Tower
George Square
Edinburgh EH8 9JX

Kaléidoscope

A French-language video kit

Tony Weymes
St Kilian's Community School
Bray
Co. Wicklow

Kaléidoscope, a purpose-made video containing twelve different segments of varying length, was produced in 1987 by University College, Dublin, in assocation with the Bureau d'Action Linguistique of the French Embassy, Dublin, and the French Teachers' Association. An international edition was published by Editions Hachette, Paris, in 1989. As well as the videocassette there is a pupil's workbook and a teacher's book with a transcript. Each segment of the video is accompanied by a selection of exercises (from pre- to post-viewing) designed to exploit all its aspects. These exercises encompass the four basic skills to a degree appropriate to Leaving Certificate standard or higher, depending on the intensity of exploitation.

The aim of *Kaléidoscope* is to promote language acquisition by enlisting unconscious language-learning processes in a comparatively tension-free environment. Language is presented in its full and authentic context, and the exercises aim to promote imaginative and traditional responses.

Since *Kaléidoscope* was purpose-made, it may be useful to consider its structure. Firstly, there is no particular progression between the units. Nor is the order of exercises intended to be prescriptive. Teachers may choose units and exercises taking account of the interests and abilities of their pupils.

The internal structure of the units is as follows:

Mise en train

The function of this stage is essentially motivational. It should involve the learners in the theme of the unit and prepare them for the more detailed, analytical language work to come. The exercises operate at the level of global comprehension and general impressionistic response to what is seen on the screen. In certain units "before viewing" exercises are included.

These can involve anticipating the content of the unit or recalling previous knowledge of linguistic and cultural material relevant to the sequence.

Pour mieux comprendre

These exercises have a number of objectives. Firstly, they guide the viewer towards detailed understanding of the content of the unit. In addition, they provide an opportunity for practising the main language points being covered before leading on to more productive, open-ended work. Most of these exercises are to be done "while viewing", but a certain number can be done without having access to the tape.

Activités complémentaires

These are "post-viewing" exercises and focus mainly on the productive skills of speaking and writing. Simulation and role-play activities arise naturally from what has been viewed on the screen and provide opportunities for small-group work in class. A range of writing activities for work at home is also included.

Pour en savoir plus

The last stage of each sequence contains a number of reading texts that have been chosen because of their particular reference to the sequence on the video. No language activities have been included for this follow-up material. Teachers may choose to devise their own exercises or simply use the texts for extensive reading purposes.

While the French teachers attending the seminar were naturally very interested in the presentation of *Kaléidoscope*, curiosity and envy were evident in teachers of other languages, many of whom expressed their admiration and the hope that similar videos would be made for their subjects soon.

Daoine ag Caint

Irish-language videos

Helen Ó Murchú
Comhar na Múinteoirí Gaeilge

From 1982 to 1986 the Bank of Ireland funded a research project in the Centre for Language and Communication Studies, Trinity College, Dublin, on the learning/teaching of Irish. The outcome of the project included reference syllabuses and an archive of video material.

The archive consists of thirty-minute interviews that I conducted with 24 people prominent in Irish life and a then student in Trinity College (see the appended list). At the time of recording, the intention was eventually to provide a series of authentic materials on specific themes from which autonomous learners/improvers could choose those topics of particular interest to them.

While devoted to one theme, each interview nevertheless contains a variety of interesting material. This is due to two factors: principally the interviewees themselves, and also to some extent to the method of interviewing. While the interviewer researched each theme and prepared a possible line of questioning, the interview itself was in no way constrained by this but was allowed to develop naturally, with as little intrusion as possible by the interviewer. There were no re-takes or changes. Each interview was conducted as a live one-off performance. The interviewer is heard but not seen, in all cases, to maintain focus on the principal speaker and his/her theme. All interviews were recorded in studio against the same backdrop to maintain visual continuity. While the result is "talking heads", I would contend that

- seeing and hearing simultaneously aids comprehension;
- learners find it easier to deal with one speaker at a time;
- in fact, the majority of current programmes in Irish on television - access to which one would hope to be one of the ultimate aims of the series - are largely in the "talking heads" format;

- providing learners with information on an area in which they are interested aids both comprehension and linguistic as well as personal development.

The interviewees include both native speakers and highly competent learners of Irish. A full range of contemporary varieties of the language is heard. While all the speakers are naturally articulate and at ease talking to camera, the interviews are nevertheless, as the tapescript indicates, natural spoken language with the usual redundancies, hesitations, reformulations, and - very useful for the learner - examples of compensation strategies and metalanguage.

The interviewees were chosen, first because they each had expertise in a particular area, and secondly to make clear to learners some of the central sociolinguistic truths about Irish: that very many people in Ireland are competent bilinguals; that many of our more prominent citizens are among them; and that this situation has been produced by a whole cluster of interrelated factors, most of which are touched on in the series. Learning a language in context also means being given a context for learning it.

The themes discussed include, for example, place names, literature, music, sport, politics, economics, management, media and publishing, education, language planning, institutions, the voluntary movement, bilingualism in individuals and in the family, learning languages, European issues, technology, girls and education, public services such as the ESB, and Northern Ireland. Each interviewee, however, speaks also in a personal vein, on other matters. The interviewees *are* the series; without them, it could not have existed. They provided us with a most valuable archive, and our thanks are due to them for giving so generously of their time and expertise. It is with great sadness that we have witnessed the death of two of them since the recordings were made: Breandán Breathnach and Aindrias Ó Muimhneacháin. *In iothlainn Dé go gcastar sinn.*

It is still intended to provide a series of videos on specific themes, under the general title *Daoine ag Caint*. However, the first set of videos, recently completed, has taken a different format. I decided to produce an introductory compilation, using brief excerpts from *all* speakers, within the general notional-functional framework of *Towards a Communicative Curriculum for Irish* (Little et al. 1985), one of the two reference syllabuses produced by the project, and directed generally at the post-primary level. This compilation resulted in three thirty-minute videos, each with five themes across a range

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of speakers and functions. The themes are as follows: Tape 1 - where interviewees come from (place and description), where they live, their family and their age, their pastimes, their interests; Tape 2 - schooling, Slógadh and debates, summer college, Irish-medium schooling, interview with a student (revision); Tape 3 - a brief account of interviewees' life to date, media generally and television, Dublin, describing or contrasting people or events, learning Irish.

Two further additions were made, to aid both teacher and learner. Each speaker within each segment is followed by a caption on screen, illustrating either a function or a structural or lexical item (distinguished by colour). Each speaker is clearly numbered for easy retrieval and - on first appearance - named on screen. The compilation, hopefully the first in a series, is accompanied by a tapescript and worksheets for the learners.

The tapescript is primarily for the teacher, but could also, depending on circumstances, be used by learners. The booklet of worksheets is introduced by general notes for teachers, with notes on, for example, possible ways of dealing with vocabulary and syntax. The worksheets were devised on the assumption that learners learn better when active in their own learning, at their own pace, moving from global to more detailed comprehension and onwards to production in speech or writing, having their attention drawn to various necessities and possibilities on the way. In addition, some pre-listening pointers are indicated for the teacher as well as some possible post-listening extension of the material in the segments. The worksheets and advice are intended only as possible avenues to explore rather than the only way of proceeding. They have been prepared for the first video of the three only, with the intention of providing possible guidelines as to how the teacher could deal with either the remainder of the material on tape, or indeed any (authentic) text.

The package, three videos with two accompanying booklets, is available at £35 from Comhar na Múinteoirí Gaeilge, 7 Cearnóg Mhuirfean, Baile Átha Cliath 2.

Thanks are due to the producer, Michael Curran, particularly for his work on the captions, and to the studio crew, Frank Loftus and John Rowland, who between them greatly developed my technical vocabulary. I hope to maintain it with the help of An Crannchur Náisiúnta and complete the series. The initial compilation could not have been made without the financial help of Bord na Gaeilge. I was at all times sustained by the unobtrusive Director of CLCS, David Little, who gave me my head and

thereby, hopefully, maintains his own flank free from attack. *Táim buíoch díobh go léir.*

List of interviewees

Cathal Ó hÁinle
Stiofán Ó hAnnracháin
Brian Ó Baoill
Breandán Breathnach
Fionnbarra Ó Ceallacháin
Breandán Ó Ciobháin
Finbarr Fitzpatrick
Máire Geoghegan-Quinn
T. P. Hardiman
Peadar Mac an Iomaire
Dónall Ó Móráin
Seán Ó Mórdha
Aindrias Ó Muimhneacháin
Micheál Ó Muircheartaigh
Pádraig Ó Muircheartaigh
Caoimhín Ó Murchú
Máirtín Ó Murchú
Máire Mhic Niallais
Eamonn Ó hÓgáin
Dónall Ó Riagáin
Treasa Uí Riagáin
Bríd Rogers
Máire Mhac an tSaoi
Seán Ó Tuama
T. K. Whitaker

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Cluichí Teanga sa Seomra Ranga
Language games in the classroom

Nóirín Ní Nuadháin
Mary Immaculate College
Limerick

Léiriú atá anseo ar conas cluichí teanga, go háirithe an cluiche *Aimsigh na Difríochtaí*, a eagrú chun fíorchumarsáid a spreagadh idir na foghlaimeoirí.

What?

Cluichí Teanga sa Seomra Ranga is a 25-minute video presentation produced by the Blackrock Teachers' Centre in collaboration with the Audio-Visual Department, University College, Dublin, to enable teachers of Irish to set up and use communicative games in the language lesson. Games are language activities which provide an opportunity for extended use of Irish and provide as much intensive language practice as the traditional drill but in a more acceptable form. The language of most games can be predetermined and pre-taught, and the pupils are encouraged to learn it quickly because they know it will be needed for the game. Thus there is an immediacy not usually discernible in the Irish-language classroom. English-language games readily available are adapted for this presentation and show how they facilitate the teaching and learning of Irish.

Why?

Primary school teachers in Ireland are all teachers of a second language, Irish. There is a prescribed course for all grades, *Nuachúrsaí Comhra* ("New Conversation Courses", 1971), which uses audio-visual methodology. The course, which runs for eight years, suffers from a lack of variety. In a survey conducted in 1984, 64% of teachers admitted that they never reached the production phase of the lesson (Céim 5/Step 5), either because it was too difficult or because they had no time (INTO 1984, 10.2). Harris (1984, p.65, Table 4.9) has pointed to the pupils' inability to use the morphology of verbs despite the amount of time spent practising paradigms.

It seems to me that a division of a lesson into two phases, as advocated by Littlewood (1981, p.86), together with the use of language games, would greatly improve the use of Irish in the primary school. The language necessary for playing the game would be taught and practised in phase (i), pre-communicative activities, and used to communicate meanings in phase (ii), communicative activities. Details about these phases are set out in an information-gap communicative game, *Aimsigh na Difríochtaí* (*Spot the Difference*), Ní Nuadháin 1986, pp.4f.). There are ten topics in the booklet to supplement the existing primary school curriculum and relating to the interests of young teenagers. The pictures were carefully constructed to elicit lexical items relating to the topics and functional-notional categories with a high frequency. The video was made primarily to show how to set up and play *Aimsigh na Difríochtaí* as a sample game. Six other games were adapted and played to show the exploitability and transfer of skills learned, from one game to another. It was hoped that the video would encourage teachers to use games in the teaching of Irish and that learners would benefit from the immediacy and variety which the games would bring to the classroom. Teachers could also use Littlewood's two-phase model to allow their pupils to use Irish in activities such as those suggested at the end of any lesson in the *Nuachúrsaí Comhra*.

How?

A class of 10/11-year-olds was "borrowed" from Carysfort Primary School, Blackrock, Co. Dublin, for the making of *Cluichí Teanga*. They were a typical cross-section of pupils, some very bright, some with little or no Irish. All were included and benefited from the few weeks spent preparing and making the video. There were ten days between the two recording sessions in May 1988, and progress was made in pupils' understanding of oral instructions and in asking and answering questions. At first their inclination was to repeat the question. They were also trained to use the short answer. It must be remembered that they had never played any language games before or used Irish extensively. The alacrity with which these pupils understood the rules and goals of the various games, and the amount of fun they derived from playing them should encourage teachers to use games in the language classroom.

Which games?

1 *Aimsigh na Difríochtaí* (*Spot the Differences*)
Pair work. Rules: asking and answering questions about two almost identical pictures. Goal: to spot and note differences between the two pictures. Skills: listening, speaking (writing if desired).

2 *Tarraing an Pictiúr* (*Describe and Draw*)
Pair work. Rules: A has picture which B cannot see. A gives B instructions. Goal: for B to draw an accurate replica of A's picture. Skills: listening, speaking; clarifying, following instructions.

3 *Ordaigh na pictiúir* (*Sequencing of pictures*)
Group work. Rules: group decides on order of pictures. Goal: the "correct" story or group story is told with the help of the visuals. Skills: co-operation, describing situations, narrating.

4 *Fiche Ceist* (*Twenty Questions*)
Whole class and teacher. Rules: 20 yes/no questions asked. Goal: to find out object/person in question. Skills: asking questions; copula *is* in Irish distinguished from substantive verb *tá* through various questions.

5 *Cupán Tae* (*A Cup of Tea* - or any recipe)
Whole class/individuals. Rules: correct sequencing of recipe. Goal: order jumbled recipe. Spot differences between recipe on tape and oral recipe. Match pictures and verbs. Skills: sequencing, speaking, listening.

6 *Bingo* (verb or noun bingo)
Whole class. Rules: teacher calls out base form of verb; class covers past or any tense form on individual cards as appropriate. Plurals of nouns also. Goal: the pupils recognize morphological changes in verbs and nouns. Winner calls base form during next game.

7 *Cluiche Kim* (*Kim's Game*)
Whole class. Rules: teacher shows tray of objects to class; they close their eyes; teacher re-orders objects. Goal: that pupils remember original order and use prepositions *in, on, beside,* etc.

8 *Rabhlóga*
Tongue-twisters facilitate the learning of Irish phonology and syntax. "Is deacair stoca a stracadh trasna".

9 *Tomhaiseanna*
Riddles enable pupils to think in the target language and are great fun. Simplify the language if necessary and do not ask culturally difficult riddles.

Games are not for Friday afternoon. Incorporate them into a well-planned syllabus and enjoy the variety they will bring to your teaching as much as the fun the learners will have in playing them.

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Parlez-vous Banque?

Françoise Blin and Seamus Kennedy
School of Applied Languages and
Centre for New Technologies in Education
Dublin City University

Parlez-vous Banque? is a computer-assisted learning package designed to give a general overview of banking and the financial market in France. The package gives instructions on how the French banking system works as well as providing users with practical French for their banking transactions while in France.

The course is intended for anyone who is interested in the French language and various aspects of banking life in France. The package is of special benefit to language and business students as well as professional people who need to brush up their French before going on a trip to France. The programme assumes that users have a Leaving Certificate level of French.

Course objectives

The objectives are twofold:

1 To provide learners with a knowledge of business life and banking procedures in France and to develop their cultural awareness.

2 To provide learners with a working knowledge of French for banking
- to develop reading and comprehension skills;
- to acquire the relevant vocabulary;
- to produce documents (cheques, forms, loan applications, etc.);
- to develop decision-making skills through the medium of a foreign language.

How does the package do this?

The package acts as a tutor, guiding students through new concepts with the aid of abundant examples and illustrations. A series of activities and questions are then presented to learners, allowing them to become familiar

with and develop dexterity and speed in applying newly learned concepts. The approach is task-oriented.

Multiple-choice questions, cloze tests, forms to fill in, and true/false questions, along with some special features, are used to provide learners with an interactive environment where effective learning can take place. These special features are:

1 Authentic documents are used and reproduced, allowing learners to become familiar with French financial documents:
   - brochures designed by French banks for their customers;
   - cheques, bank statements, lodgement/withdrawal slips, standing orders, credit cards, etc.;
   - receipts, invoices;
   - definitions, texts, issues from specialized books and magazines;
   - letters;
   - extracts from the specialized press (stock exchange, investments, etc.)

2 All instructions are given in French, placing learners in a French environment. The instructions are fully explained in English in the first section of the course, *How to use the course*. New concepts and activities are introduced through the medium of French, with the aid of graphics when necessary.

3 Learners have on-line access to a complete dictionary of specific terms defined in simple French.

4 Learners are evaluated *via* a game at the end of each module, which is intended to encourage learning without the fear of embarrassment in front of colleagues. In the course of a lesson, students are not scored but feedback is provided in sufficient quantity - students are encouraged to analyse their errors and to decide which course of action to take. It should be noted that this feature was welcomed by most students as it gave them full responsibility for their learning and self-evaluation. Also, it is worth noting that a student's performance is thought satisfactory when the student has shown his/her ability to understand a situation and to carry out the task required of him/her through French (e.g. filling in a cheque correctly, keeping a current account in credit, making the right decision regarding investments).

5 Lessons are easily accessed through the use of menus. On-screen instructions and prompts mean that users know where they are in the course and what to do next.

6 A bookmarker facility allows users to leave the course at any time and return to where they left off, thus avoiding unnecessary repetition.

What does the package contain?

The course consists of five disks giving 15-20 hours of instruction on the operation of the French financial market. It is divided into four modules:

1 *Le compte bancaire*
involves opening bank accounts and making various banking transactions, e.g. withdrawals, writing cheques, bank statements, etc.

2 *Emprunts et placements*
involves saving and applying for loans from banks; learners also learn how to buy shares in French companies and the role of banks in such transactions.

3 *La banque et l'entreprise*
deals with the various ways of financing French companies and the role of banks in raising capital.

4 *Jeu*
A revision of the previous modules is incorporated in a game where the student is placed in the role of a banker.

To date, only the first module is complete.

How to use the course

Parlez-vous Banque? has been designed as a stand-alone package to be used in a self-instructional mode. No additional material is required to complete the course. However, the package can profitably be used in the context of a French-for-business course. Students can progress with the package at their own pace, either in group sessions or individually, and then use their acquired knowledge in class, where oral competence will be developed.

The course is not exclusive of other media such as video, audio tapes, specialized press, or simulation packages like *Le Jeu de la Banque*, and a very attractive course can be designed around it to suit the needs of specific groups of students.

Some reflections on an experiment in computer-assisted language learning

Carlos Lobo
Department of French
Trinity College
Dublin

Supply is the name given to a set of CALL routines for learners of French which uses Christopher Jones's authoring program *A Demi Mot*, part of an ensemble of software produced by Eurocentres (the other programs in the series are: *Mot pour Mot, A Notre Avis, A Juste Titre, Jeux de Mots, Term à Terme*). *Supply* is characterized on the one hand by the relative simplicity of its operations at the level of the system disk, and on the other by a lack of originality, if we compare the types of exercises made possible by the computer with traditional pedagogical approaches. It thus prompts the question, what are the advantages of introdu-cing such a program into a language course?

Befcre I attempt to answer this question, *Supply* must be put in its context, since not to do so would expose us to the risk of missing the real significance of CALL materials and leaving us in the realm of "blind publicity" or "mere fascination". It is worth noting that this latter term is recurrent in the CALL literature. For example, Farrington (1989) writes: "Les fascinantes possibilités de cette merveilleuse machine qu'est l'ordinateur ..." and: "... nous disons bien fascinantes, car il est utile de souligner d'emblée que dès le départ nos activités ont été inspirées par la curiosité intellectuelle plutôt que par un quelconque besoin utilitaire".

The context of *Supply* is complex, even confused, yet without excessive simplification we can discern two tendencies. The first one is an international trend towards the application of computers to language learning/teaching tasks which claims to be communicative. This is what is called CALL in English and ELAO ("enseignement des langues assisté d'ordinateur") in French (see Jones 1986, cit. Farrington 1989). The second tendency can be summed up as a series of theoretical approaches which aims at reducing natural languages to the scope of systemic models (Berry 1975),

in other words a kind of explanation in terms of "form" and "function", not in their general sense but in that restrictive sense used in computer science and modern biology. The former tendency seems to be more recent and stands as a pedagogical and practical illustration of the latter. As a matter of fact, systemic models appeared in the 1960s, whereas the first applications in CALL took place around the beginning of the 1980s. Obviously, this is not the place to discuss either the value of systemic theories of language or the coherence of language learning automation projects designed to produce self-teaching materials.

Now that we have established this general context, it is possible at least to measure the gap between the theoretical aims and the computer materials on which *Supply* is based, and to understand some of the motivations for its title. As *A Demi Mot* takes up and simulates several operations which teacher and learner perform - respectively, creating and doing a "gap test" - this particular application of the computer means that the teacher spends less time preparing, correcting and explaining the tests. In fact, the machine can repeat the corrections and even some brief explanations as many times as the learner wants or needs. *Supply* therefore appears to be in the first instance a "supply teacher program" in both senses of the term - 1) replacing the teacher by the machine, and 2) helping the teacher with the computer - and in a third sense which follows from these two, namely that the program belongs to that particular category of staff whose function is to mediate between the machine and its users.

But this is only one aspect of the problem. For there is no point in supplying language teaching in this way unless the machine can provide pedagogical explanations of learners' mistakes. But *Supply* cannot provide explanations of this kind, which are always a compromise between learner supposed capabilities, particular difficulties, and the rules or regularities of the target language. Thus it is an assessment rather than a teaching program. In view of this, it was necessary to recommend that the first-year students for whom it was devised should be given information about the aspects of grammar treated in the computer laboratory in their other language classes. As co-ordination was limited to the French language assistants, we quickly realized that the best solution for the moment would be to give orally, during computer classes, the few rules without which any assessment would be absurd, or else to create a new kind of test in which the rule was exhibited not in the introduction or in the help page, but in the exercise itself. This kind of text was rather difficult to write as it was

necessary to imagine a "theoretical fiction" in which the linguistic rule was clearly transposed, and where the gap appeared in the right place, so that it was possible to understand the meaning of the text and to guess what word or grammatical form corresponded to the gap.

Neither "behaviourist" nor "communicative", this attempt means that we think it is necessary, in learning a foreign language, to know the rules - whatever their status may be - so that the learner can make the correct proposition with absolute certainty. The rules are relevant to a type of reflection on writing and speaking rather than to grammatical discourse. They arise from enlightened practice.

Supply is from this point of view a battery of gap tests standing in for a utopian language teaching program, and therefore condemned to be supplied, complemented and improved by others. It is not a solution.

Fascination in front of the machine that some already call an "intelligent blackboard" cannot take the place of learners' intelligence and motivation nor of teachers' attention and capabilities. A blackboard (or a screen) is always dumb without a head. Or, to be more precise, it is only what a hand holding a (metaphorical) piece of chalk writes on it and what an eye can read from it.

Awareness of this situation is a necessary requirement if one wants to be a good user of the computer in language teaching and not simply a promoter of a technological ideology. It is also necessary to face some specific problems, like the number of learners per keyboard, the communicative or interactive aspect of the computer laboratory, the adaptation of the test to learners' linguistic competences (semantic, syntactic, orthographic, even phonetic - cf., for example, *Keno 1* and *Keno 2*, which borrow their names from the French writer Raymond Queneau and exploit the suggestions of his book *Bâtons, Chiffres et Lettres*, in which a "popular model" for phonetic writing is proposed).

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Interactive video with the Autotutor

Hélène Conway-Mouret
Centre for Language and Communication Studies
Trinity College
Dublin

What is interactive video?

Interactive video is a video programme which can be controlled by the person who is using it. It can be implemented either as a means of enhancing computer-assisted learning routines that make full use of the computer's capacity, or as a means of giving an interactive dimension to already existing video materials.

Interactive video represents the fusion of two technologies. It links two devices with prodigious potential for information storage. The computer's capacity to store, sort and display visual images gives a versatility to interactive video unequalled by any other audio-visual medium. But interactive video is more than two pieces of hardware connected together. The user, through the computer, controls the video programme and is therefore actively involved in the running of the system, and feels in full control of both devices, the computer and the video.

How the Autotutor works

The Autotutor system comprises an Acorn BBC computer with disk drives, a VHS videocassette recorder with remote control, the Autotutor "black box", and an RGB/PAL/audio colour monitor. The computer interactions that present and in various ways process the video are written in Microtext, an authoring language that has been widely associated with experiments in interactive video. Embedded in these interactions are Autotutor commands that control the video recorder and switch the screen display between computer and video. For a fuller description of the system, see Little and Davis 1986.

The pedagogical role of the Autotutor

When I first became interested in the Autotutor I had only a dim awareness

that the computer could be a useful tool for learning; but my initial apprehension in approaching the system soon disappeared when I realized how easy it was to programme and operate. As a beginner I needed only 30 hours to create a programme that takes an hour to work through; whereas Davies notes that "it has been estimated that it takes a proficient programmer at least 100 hours to create a robust user-friendly program which will keep the learner busy for one hour" (Davies & Higgins 1985).

The programme that I designed was conceived as an optional course component. This meant that although the textual environment was controlled to meet the purposes of reinforcing and consolidating materials and techniques taught in the course, the learner could nevertheless be given a total freedom of choice by offering him a central menu. Thus, depending on how the programme is approached, it yields different results. One student may concentrate mainly on aural comprehension, whereas another may be chiefly interested in grammatical exercises. The advantage is that in working through the programme, the learner acquires the capacity to make decisions on the basis of his own needs. He assumes the role of initiator and is free to work when he feels inclined to do so. Autonomous learning is thus promoted.

The Autotutor's first role is that of presenting content by means of the audio-visual medium. It then asks the learner to evaluate that content and offers a series of tasks to be performed. It finally corrects the learner and provides further input. The interaction between the system and the user can be made more collaborative in that lexical help and immediate feedback can be given. This structure is actually very similar to the "full-frontal" pedagogical procedures described by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975). But if the pattern resembles that of "full-frontal" classroom discourse, a learner-centred approach adopted with the system can change this pattern of interaction in order to avoid too much computer-pupil-computer discourse and allow for more pupil-computer-pupil discourse. One should not forget all the devices available to enable the learner to be in control and take on the initiating role normally held by the teacher. Also, constant stimulation creates a sense of involvement lacking in the teacher-pupil-teacher structure of so much classroom discourse. Furthermore, the programme, rather than binding the learner to a predetermined lesson, tries, by the range of activities it offers, to free him to create his own learning experience. In fact, it offers an environment in which the learner can play and manipulate the language. One then realizes that the pedagogical role

played by the Autotutor can vary depending on one's own view of which learning and teaching approaches should be adopted, for the system allows the author to adopt a language-learning rather than a computer-based approach when creating a programme.

Some conclusions

My own project reflects a desire on my part to have access to software which could be used as a research tool as well as have application in the classroom. As Kenning and Kenning (1983) point out: "In the long run, the greatest advantage of the computer must be that it urges the teaching profession to analyse what goes on in the classroom and reassess the basic tenets of the educational process." One can thus explore the didactic and pedagogical possibilities of a tool which can be adapted to our needs. The system has its limitations and its faults, but it should not be discarded because it is not perfect. After all, none of the instructional aids that teachers use are perfect.

I think that a teacher benefits in various ways from having CALL materials integrated in his course. First, he is given the means to make use of various media and so can widen the input in order to attain a full communicative repertoire. He also has to adopt a more learner-centred approach, which is more easily achieved when creating materials for the system than when preparing a more "traditional" class (this claim is based entirely on my own experience). And finally, if the teacher designs his own programme, he will be most familiar with the materials and will be able to allocate to the different parts of his course the tasks they can best perform (for example, gap-filling exercises can be left to the Autototur session). Davies argues that the computer "does not, or rather should not ... replace the "live" teacher ... [and] should only be employed where it is appropriate" (Davies & Higgins 1985). The role of the teacher is not called into question. On the contrary, he is given the chance to analyse fully the needs of his students if he wants to devise a programme himself and run a course in which the computer has a place. The Autotutor can be integrated into an existing course instead of creating a new pedagogy centred on it. *Radio Scoop* is one example of a programme aimed at first-year university students of French.

I felt that my project was very positive from a teacher's point of view, but the feedback received from pilot users was even more encouraging. It

was received in the form of a questionnaire inserted at the end of the programme, which means that the learners immediately assess their learning experience and give their impressions of the Autotutor. The Autotutor seems particularly suitable for those learners who feel they need more individual help than they receive in regular classes and whose cognitive styles favour self-paced personal instruction. Finally, if it can be argued that such programmes present some tasks similar to those that can be performed by more conventional means, from what I witnessed they are not normally performed with such interest and motivation. For example, the task of looking up a word in a dictionary may be quite tedious for most students. In the system, the lexical help is not only easily accessible at any time before or after completing an exercise, but it is also broad in that it consists of a dictionary and a matching exercise, so that the learner is actively involved in finding out the definitions of the words proposed.

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III : Concluding plenary session

Round table discussion of issues raised by the seminar

Transcribed and edited by Bebhinn Ó Meadhra

In the round table discussion, questions were put from the floor to a panel consisting of the morning's speakers: Christine Hélot, Geraldine Kennedy, David Little and Mary Ruane, who were joined by Miriam Broderick (College of Technology, Kevin Street, Dublin), Séamus Ó Conghaile (Inspector for French, Department of Education), and Eleanor Moussoulides (Modern Language Teachers' Association). The discussion was chaired by the president of IRAAL, Liam Mac Mathúna. The report which follows is a lightly edited version of the proceedings.

The language laboratory

Marie-Annick Gash: Would an obvious use for the language laboratory be for training in languages for special purposes?

Christine Hélot: Yes. Although I did not mention the use of the language lab for LSP learners, I mentioned that it could be used at all levels, from beginners through intermediate to advanced; this would include learners of LSP as well.

Juliette Péchenart: To add to that, I would like to point out that my colleagues in Dublin City University use the language lab to train interpreters in consecutive interpreting. They have an interpreting suite, but they do part of the work in the language lab.

Christine Hélot: I could also add that in Maynooth College the lab is used by departments other than the language departments. The Sociology Department uses the language lab for training their students to become interviewers; the Geography Department uses it to show tape/slide programmes. I have heard of a school in Cork where the nuns are using the language lab to teach sex education because they find that they don't have any problems with giggling and blushing and so on when their

students are sitting in individual booths and getting the information on a one-to-one basis. So we could spread the use of the language lab to other subjects. The expensive technology would then obviously be much more cost-effective.

Claire Laudet: One feature of some of the new language labs is the possibility of pairing students, which I have found extremely good for spontaneous speaking activities, whether pretending to be on a telephone or just having a conversation that can be recorded.

Video

Eamonn Rodgers: On the question of video, is there a danger that the "popular entertainment" connotations of television and video may adversely affect concentration and absorption in the video class?

Mary Ruane: The association between television/video and entertainment is both an advantage and a disadvantage. The problem for the teacher is to steer some middle course. Many teachers feel (and I have been surprised at the extent to which I have encountered this attitude) that there is a real problem if a programme is going to be perceived as very enjoyable by students. If it is likely to be interesting and perhaps to yield a few laughs, then this is the very programme that the teachers will be most reluctant to use, because they fear that they may lose control over the class. But I don't think that this happens. I think that, in fact, if the document really engages their attention, the students will learn at a subconscious level, though that may not be immediately transferrable to productive use in every sphere. The language would need much more practice than that. Acquisition will not occur as successfully where the document is not perceived as entertainment. So I think many of the problems are in the minds of teachers who feel possibly somewhat redundant when all of this is happening or who fear that the situation may get out of control.

Eamonn Rodgers: What about a middle way to deal with that problem? Should there be pre-viewing activities to focus on certain elements, not to let it just wash over them, as it were?

Mary Ruane: I think you should let it wash over them. That's one of the ways in which they actually can learn a great deal. I'm not in favour of a very

structured approach to it.

Liam Mac Mathúna: Could I ask a question myself? Given that pupils are watching a lot of television anyway, the reaction I notice in some of my children is that they find themselves so tired out watching videos in school that when they come home they flop down and read a book or something. I'm wondering if video would counter this at all.

Mary Ruane: The answer to that is very simple: the sequences should not be too long. In the early eighties, pupils might have been asked to watch a video for forty-five minutes to an hour. Nowadays that would be regarded as absolutely unworkable. A short piece can be enjoyed: the full impact is received and something can be picked up from it; subconscious learning processes can be activated and then what has been acquired can be used by the teacher as a stimulus for other activities.

Technology and discipline

Máire Mullarney: It seems to be generally agreed that classes are too large and this contributes to the problems mentioned above of pupils getting out of hand. Between language labs and video rooms and so on, would it not be easier nowadays to break up a class, so that some can be left in another room, working with computers, for example, allowing the teacher to interact more effectively with a smaller group?

Mary Ruane: That kind of arrangement would be ideal, with its move to a more learner-centred approach. But from a practical point of view it would be very difficult to organize: two or three rooms would not normally be available to each class.

Technology abused/misused/disused

Frank Maguire: Are we perhaps heading for an abuse of technology - "Use the thing: it's there"? Reference was made to the use of the language lab for sex instruction. I can think of no more dangerous way to have sex instruction than isolated like that in a booth with no opportunity to react or discuss it. And as for using the lab for geography: pertinent questions should be asked beforehand about the function of the technology. Is it used just because it's there? Perhaps we use technology just to waste time.

Liam Mac Mathúna: That raises a basic question about the whole attitude to technology. Perhaps we should restrict our discussion to questions of langauge teaching.

Christine Hélot: I'm no expert on sex education, but I'll answer the question about geography, since it refers to my college. They don't use it instead of a teacher or of giving a lecture; they use it very selectively to augment outdoor projects. It is an extra option, showing to other students the tapes and slides made by a group of students and staff. I don't think it is an abuse.

David Little: I believe that poor applications of anything tend to be self-regulating. When a new technology is first introduced, there will be a rush of people who mistakenly believe that there is a lot of money to be made out of developing instructional materials. The haste with which they proceed is unlikely to result in very carefully considered applications of the technology. What then happens is that the technology is oversold: to teachers, to educational planners, and to school managers. And it's oversold generally, so that parents at home and PTAs tend to think that whatever the new technology is, it must be good, and if it's not in the classroom the school must be backward. But what then happens - and the history of the language laboratory is a very clear example of this - is that after two or three years, the people at the sharp end (that is, the teachers and often the students) decide that it's not much use to them. That's why there are all these locked language laboratories gathering dust up and down the country. So: I think it is self-regulating; but the pity of it is that bad applications of new technologies tend to come along first, because it is always easier to do something badly than to do it well. Thus the technology itself gets a bad name: people say language laboratories don't work, or computers are no good, or whatever. Then, of course, there is a general prejudice against a more thoughtful exploitation. I think that, in language teaching generally, we are still suffering from the problems that we had with the language laboratory, and also from the fact that it was originally conceived as an electronic classroom and not as a learning resource, which is how it tends to be used nowadays - a much more interesting application.

Josephine Griffin: Returning to video: is it central or supplementary? The sub-conscious absorption of material "washing over" the learner seems

to require more time than is available. In our Italian Department in University College, Galway, where our students have to learn a certain amount of Italian in quite a short time, we use the language lab, and to great advantage. But it seems to me that videos would be supplementary in that they need to be left until later when students will have enough language not to be swamped and discouraged by them.

Mary Ruane: This is a complex question. Video can be either central or supplementary. There are acquisition-based course materials that are entirely video; there are others, equally acquisition-based, where video is used only in a supplementary manner. There seems to be no fixed rule as to which approach is better for acquisition: choosing one approach over the other would seem to depend solely on the preference of the teacher. A second point you raise is the length of time required. It is true that the approach I described does take a lot of time, but I was not recommending an approach entirely based on letting language wash over the learners. A balance should be struck between that and communicative activities. This raises the whole problem of the roles of input and interaction in second language acquisition. With regard to the suitability of video for outright beginners, it is true that there is a great shortage of acquisition-based materials for that level. Indeed, the video materials we ourselves have developed have been more for intermediate and early advanced learners. That being said, I think much can be done in adapting such material for beginners.

Other media

David Little: The question about video materials should be broadened out to media materials generally. Most language learners just don't get enough input, or exposure to the target language, and media of various kinds can help to remedy that. As teachers, we can easily come to equate what learners have to learn exclusively with what we feel we have to teach. Teachers seeing what learners can be led to do on in-service days organized by Authentik, not only in Ireland but in the United Kingdom and Scandinavia, have said to us time and again: "What you are trying to do is very interesting, but it's beyond my pupils." There is an assumption that the raw business of communication through the target language is somehow too difficult for learners, almost by definition; whereas it always turns out to be the case that they can cope with it quite

well. It is also true that it takes time to learn a language: input is not necessarily always converted into intake or internalized. Now, I consider that there is a place for grammar instruction in the language programme, but I think that if we became much more input-based rather than structure-led, in many instances the learners would actually use the target language - as we saw in Mary Ruane's classroom video this morning - in a more sophisticated and natural way than tends to be the case otherwise.

Availability of materials

Hélène Conway-Mouret: The problem is that there is a shortage of software, coupled with the inability of many teachers to make proper use of the hardware.

David Little: This used to be said of the language laboratory. But that was because the language laboratory was being regarded as an electronic teacher, requiring on tape the full complement of a teacher's resources, experience and competence. But if the language laboratory and other media technologies are thought of as channels for getting different kinds of raw material to learners, the picture changes somewhat. If four lessons a week can be based on two or three clips of video, lasting about three minutes each, how many minutes of video are needed for the whole year? It doesn't actually add up to a huge amount. Also, we tend to worry too much about having material pre-processed. Once you have a few examples, it should be quite easy to adapt those activities to other video, other audio, other media. If the teacher is too pressed for time, the learners can usefully devise such exercises for themselves and one another.

Creative pupil participation

Noel Canty: These technologies - computers, video, etc. - are particularly important for the majority of our students who are not in touch with target language people. We have to bring the target language people to them. For example, our school is in an area where pupils are not very well-motivated. But last year we took a group of pupils to Grafton Street to video the French rugby supporters. We even got filmed ourselves and went out on FR3 that evening as examples of Irish people using French!

The kids got a lot out of interviewing French people. Some of them wanted to do it again, so a few weeks later, when there was another match, we headed for a *saumon fumé* shop (it was mid-week: there weren't so many French supporters about) and we bagged a journalist after an hour. Then we hung around outside the stadium, chasing Frenchmen. Eventually, we got a diplomat (though we let the ambassador, who was with him, go) and he consented to be interviewed despite the lashing rain. This tape is to go out on the *Late Late Show* dealing with the effects of 1992.

Dermot O'Flynn: The next step might be to turn them into directors of foreign language TV films?

David Little: On that note, we have found that graduate students are greatly motivated by being required to put together a brief foreign language sketch, with an inescapable deadline for filming with a video camera.

Open access

Eleanor Moussoulides: Why not give pupils video and audio tapes to take home? *Salut!* has increased the use of pupil's tapes, which is a great step forward. It is regrettable but true that kids do not read at home, and many of them are totally committed to television; we should have a video library for them. If we ever get satellite channels here, we could develop a stock of video recordings which they could borrow.

Self-assessment

Jennifer Ridley: Should self-assessment be done by pupils who make video films in class? Would it encourage or discourage them?

David Little: I think that kind of thing has to be handled very carefully: it could be seriously demotivating. There are two kinds of self-assessment that one might attach to the use of video. The first kind is where a video project has been carried out, the activity was exciting, a film has been produced. Afterwards, the pupils can go back and look critically at what was produced without any danger of undermining their undeniable achievement. It is a different matter when microphone and camera are taken into the classroom and then the learners are invited to criticize their own performances. I cannot think of any circumstances under

which I would willingly subject learners to this. It might be useful for the teacher to view such a film to find out things about the pupils' interlanguage and how they are learning, but it does not seem easy or even motivationally safe to involve the learners in such a critique directly.

Motivating reading

Richard Masterson: Mary Ruane and Geraldine Kennedy mentioned in their talks the motivational effect of video and computers on reading. What is the opinion of the panel about the relationship between reading on a computer and encouragement of reading generally? Will it stop with the computer?

Liam Mac Mathúna: It's not clear what the effect is. Computers seem to become obsessional for a few years at least. The only effect I've seen is pupils reading the computer manual from cover to cover.

David Little: On reading in general, Eleanor Moussoulides has said that children don't read as much as we would like them to, but she was talking about reading for pleasure. Functional reading is a different matter. They will read what they want to know about. When you give them *Authentik*, they flick through the pages and stop at something of interest, and will spend quite a lot of time trying to understand that bit.

Constraints on media usage at various educational levels

Liam Mac Mathúna: At third level, we have access to greater facilities but we have less time available. Has anyone given thought to the differences between media applications at second and third level?

Mary Ruane: I'd be interested to hear views on that from people present. Why are teachers so reluctant to use technology? There are *Kaléidoscope* videos in 250 schools in Ireland - that's about 25% of the total, quite a good number. But I have no doubt that the number of teachers in those schools actually using it is far smaller.

Miranda Stewart: The use of video in the language departments of our university (Strathclyde) is increasing, but within university class time we are not able to go in for extensive listening. So, we use video which is accessed outside class time; it is used for trigger purposes and then worked on in class. Our sources include satellite TV, and there we use

a "template" approach: we have a stock number of basic exercises which we can apply to whatever is coming off the set any particular night, and this helps to avoid staff burn-out.

Frank Maguire: One obvious problem is that there is no match between modern technology and syllabus design. There is also no teacher training. Primary teachers use the computer one hundred times more than post-primary teachers. This is because nobody in post-primary schools sees its relevance to their subject and everyone is intent on getting those As, Bs and Cs. With the computers, the pupils are working and the teacher is sitting back: he feels guilty. The teacher is tempted to jump in and do something instead of sitting back and seeing how the thing floats: that is a style that post-primary teachers don't have time for.

David Little: I agree entirely, and it brings us back to what was said earlier about the fact that learning takes time. As teachers we are so obsessed with our duty to impart information that there is no time in the regular class for learners to step off the whirligig of instruction and actually puzzle something out for themselves. Yet it is by puzzling things out that they actually learn. We have seen on Authentik in-service days, when teachers are asked to come and observe learners learning, that they find it intolerable not to intervene.

Seán MacEntee: My general impression is that teachers of civics, of life-skills and of religion enjoy video and feel under no constraint. Our company (CKC) would like to produce videos in support of language teaching, but the feedback from language teachers gives us no encouragement. They feel greatly constrained by the syllabus, by time, etc.; so that while they express great enthusaism for the medium, they feel that there simply wouldn't be time to teach in this particular way. That's disappointing.

Eleanor Moussoulides: I feel that that is a faulty perception on the part of language teachers. As a teacher of German, I feel that the best preparation for the Leaving Certificate oral in German is video. In the German oral you have to do role-playing and also tell a picture story. There is no better preparation for this than watching short sequences of certain language functions on the video, which can be turned, as Mary Ruane was saying, into all sorts of communicative exercises and role-playing.

Video allows you to see not only the speaking, but the whole interaction, the body language, etc.

General thoughts

Liam Mac Mathúna: As we are drawing towards the end of this session, I would like to ask if you have any general thoughts on the subject or suggestions about any follow-up IRAAL might make in this field.

Máire Mullarney: I would like to make a general remark. The fifth-year pupils we saw talking French on Mary Ruane's video were impressive. But if they had spent those five years doing Esperanto, their performance in that would have been even more impressive. Another question I would like to ask is whether anyone has thought of showing the kids what they would really like to watch, even if it's *Dallas* or *Dynasty*, which are dubbed in languages of all kinds, since they are popular, unfortunately, all over Europe.

The cable TV controversy

Noel Canty: As far as TV5 is concerned, there is no problem with taping bits of French TV. The problem is to actually have the station. Dublin does not have a normal cable TV service, in that the fourteen channels available are all in English. Cablelink have dug their heels in on the matter; they refuse to transmit languages. I have taken this matter as far as Brussels. I have spoken to the second-in-command of the audio-visual section, and I have been asked to submit a full document. They are amazed at the attitude of the authorities here. But I must say the government is pro. A question has been raised in the cabinet by Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, and the Minister for Education, Mrs O'Rourke, has even offered to launch the station when and if we get it. Ours is the last cable service in the EC to be without TV5. It's not only French that I'm campaigning for: German, Spanish and Italian also have their rights. However, the three German stations available present problems. For example, Satellite 1 was attacked in Germany for its lack of culture. This is because all the German spending on culture goes into the Goethe Institute. There is very little culture on German Sat1. Two internal Spanish and Italian stations are available in Cork, where there are five language stations, including two German stations and TV5.

If anyone wants to join me in the campaign for foreign language television rights in Dublin, they will be very welcome, but should be warned that I have actually been threatened! I am told that the government was disturbed by the campaign. The civil servants couldn't do any work because of me, as they are all kept busy writing off replies, at a cost of £50 each letter, explaining that nobody in Dublin wants foreign languages. But this is the only way we can get across the point that the 20% of us who do actually speak more than one language of the Community deserve some say in the future of broadcasting in Ireland.

David Little: It's not only language teachers who want this. Let me relate an instance. At the time when the trial transmission of TV5 was going out, I got my hair cut. The barber told me that he had thought there was no point in his children learning French, as we don't have many French people in Ireland. But he was amazed to find that his children not only came in and switched on TV5 but understood it. He ended: "I wish I could!"

Claire Laudet: News in a foreign language is available most evenings.

Eleanor Moussoulides: Sometimes.

Technology and examinations

Mary Ruane: Someone said that the attitude to video in the post-primary schools won't change until video is incorporated into the terminal examinations. We have found that teachers say: "Why should I make my pupils look at videos when it's an audio tape they have to understand in Leaving Certificate?" I think that sums it all up. So, I would like to seize this occasion when we have an inspector here on the panel to ask the question: is it at all likely that video materials might be incorporated into the terminal examinations in the foreseeable future?

Séamus Ó Conghaile: I think it's likely, not in the immediate future, but a little bit down the road. And it's very desirable. But I would like to take this opportunity to point out, backing up what Eleanor Moussoulides was saying earlier, that there is a very false perception among teachers that a one-to-one correspondence obtains between recognized assessment procedures and valid teaching strategies. There is no such correspondence. There really isn't! The terminal exams are operations which take

place in two and a half hours at the end of the course, so they cannot possibly replicate the wide variety of teaching strategies which can take place over a period of two years. The examination is not a kind of guideline for sound teaching practice. Ideally, perhaps, it would be, and maybe that can be achieved in the distant future. I would hope that in years to come, possibly in the listening test, a video tape could be used instead of an audio tape.

Mary Ruane: Do you want to put a date on that?

Séamus Ó Conghaile: I can't put a date on it. Don't overestimate the power of inspectors!

Mary Ruane: In Britain some of the examining boards have already begun to introduce it.

Séamus Ó Conghaile: Well, I think there are very valid reasons for it. The occasions are rare during life when we listen to a disembodied voice, apart from the telephone, radio or public announcements. Much more often, we benefit by lip-reading, seeing the person face-to-face, and therefore video is a more realistic option. When we get the money, we will introduce it.

Concluding remarks

Liam Mac Mathúna: Well, it only remains for me to thank our speakers of this morning, the contributors to our fairground session at lunchtime, our panel members this afternoon, the Centre for Language and Communication Studies for looking after everything so splendidly, Eleanor Moussoulides for the catering, the people who looked after registration, and the general TCD staff. I hope that the publication of the proceedings will not be the last we hear in IRAAL of these matters, and I hope that those of our members who are interested will ensure in the coming years that, in the first instance, our own members will have a far greater awareness of the potentialities and the challenges we discussed today and that, as time goes on, we shall be able to make an impact on wider circles.

The Irish Association for Applied Linguistics (IRAAL) was founded in 1975 in order to support research in applied and general linguistics in Ireland. It pursues this aim principally by organizing seminars, special lectures, conferences and courses, and by a publications programme which includes *Teanga*, the Irish Yearbook of Applied Linguistics, as well as special volumes on specific topics. IRAAL is affiliated to the International Association for Applied Linguistics (AILA). Membership of IRAAL is open to all those with a professional and/or research interest in issues and problems which have to do with language. All correspondence regarding publications, membership, etc., should be addressed to the Secretary, IRAAL, c/o I.T.E., 31 Fitzwilliam Place, Dublin 2.

The present volume derives from a seminar on media technologies and language learning that IRAAL organized in November 1989. The four plenary papers establish some broad applied linguistic perspectives and present an overview of recent applications of audio, video and computers; there follow a series of short reports on a wide variety of practical projects that were presented in a fairground session; and the volume concludes with a transcript of the round-table discussion that brought the seminar to an end.

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123

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